



## NEWS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

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#### **Best and Worst Halloween Treats for Teeth**

*Chocolate and powdery candies are better for teeth than chewy or hard candies*

**NAPERVILLE, Ill. (October 9, 2013)** – Little ghosts and goblins will trick-or-treat to collect as much candy as they can this Halloween, but it’s not just kids who will enjoy the treats. More than 80 percent of Illinois parents admit they eat their children’s Halloween candy, according to the Delta Dental of Illinois Children’s Oral Health Survey.<sup>1</sup> But some candies have the potential to do more damage to teeth than others.

“Choose candy that melts and disappears quickly,” said Dr. Katina Spadoni, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. “The longer teeth are exposed to sugar, the longer bacteria can feed on it, which could produce cavity-causing acid.”

Dr. Spadoni says the best way to protect teeth from decay is to have candy in small portions at limited times, such as after a meal, as dessert or at regular snack times. Nearly 90 percent of Illinois parents say their kids consume Halloween candy this way.<sup>1</sup>

“It’s best to avoid letting kids snack on candy throughout the day,” said Dr. Spadoni, “and it’s extremely important kids brush their teeth or at least rinse with water after eating sweets. Remember that high sugar diets are detrimental to oral *and* overall health.”

While no sweets are good for teeth, some are less harmful than others. Delta Dental of Illinois rates the best and worst treats for teeth on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being least harmful.

1. **Sugar-free candy and gum with xylitol**

Sugar-free foods don’t contain sugar that can feed on the bacteria in the mouth and produce decay-causing acids. Gum and candy with xylitol may actually protect teeth by reducing the acids produced by bacteria and increasing saliva to rinse away excess sugars and acids.

- Delta Dental of Illinois’ survey says 41 percent of Illinois kids eat sugar-free candy at Halloween.<sup>1</sup>

2. **Powdery candy** (such as sugar straws)

Sure, powdery candy is packed with pure sugar. But powdery candy dissolves quickly and doesn’t stick to the teeth.

3. **Chocolate** (such as candy bars)

Chocolate dissolves quickly in the mouth and can be eaten easily, which decreases the amount of time sugar stays in contact with teeth. And calcium could help protect tooth enamel. However, chocolate with fillings, such as caramel and nuts, is a lot more harmful for teeth than the plain variety.

- Delta Dental of Illinois' survey says 86 percent of Illinois kids eat chocolate at Halloween.<sup>1</sup>

4. **Hard candy** (such as lollipops or mints)

Hard candy is tough on teeth because it tends to be sucked on at a leisurely pace for an extended period of time. Plus, chomping down on hard candy can chip or break teeth.

- Delta Dental of Illinois' survey says 50 percent of Illinois kids eat hard candy at Halloween.<sup>1</sup>

5. **Chewy candy** (such as caramels or gummies)

Chewy, sticky treats are particularly damaging because they are high in sugar, spend a prolonged amount of time stuck to teeth and are more difficult for saliva to break down.

- Delta Dental of Illinois' survey says 51 percent of Illinois kids eat chewy candy at Halloween.<sup>1</sup>

“Another way to protect teeth is to give kids something other than candy,” Dr. Spadoni said. Nearly 25 percent of parents hand out non-candy items to trick-or-treaters, such as toys, money or fruit.<sup>1</sup>

For additional tips on how to help keep children's teeth healthy during Halloween and all year long, visit the Tooth Fairy's Halloween website at [www.toothfairytrickytreasures.com](http://www.toothfairytrickytreasures.com).

### **About Delta Dental of Illinois**

*Delta Dental of Illinois (DDIL) is a not-for-profit dental service corporation that provides dental benefit programs to individuals and more than 5,000 employee groups throughout Illinois. DDIL covers 2 million individuals, employees and family members in these groups nationwide. DDIL is based in Naperville, Illinois and offers single-site administration and client services.*

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<sup>1</sup> Morpace Inc. conducted the 2013 Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey. Interviews were conducted statewide via the Internet with 151 primary caregivers of children from birth to age 11. For results based on the total sample of national adults, the margin of error is ±3.2 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.

### **Story Sidebar**

#### **Delta Dental Halloween Photo Contest**

*Enter to win a \$100 gift card*

What is your favorite thing about Halloween? Whether it's decorating your house, carving jack-o-lanterns or passing out candy, Delta Dental of Illinois wants to see it. Follow the steps below to enter the Delta Dental of Illinois Halloween Photo Contest for a chance to win a \$100 gift card. The contest runs now through Oct. 31 at noon CST.

It's easy to enter!

1. Snap a photo that shows your Halloween spirit. It can be a costume, spider webs or your scariest mask. Then “like” the Delta Dental of Illinois Facebook page at [facebook.com/DeltaDentalIL](https://facebook.com/DeltaDentalIL) and share your photo or post your photo on Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag #DDTrickyTreats.
2. The winner will be randomly selected and announced on Oct. 31.