



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### Top tricks and treats for a tooth-friendly Halloween

**NAPERVILLE, Ill. (October 2, 2017)** – Most little monsters will bring home a scary stash of candy after trick-or-treating, so it's not surprising that nearly 1 in 5 Illinois parents say Halloween is one of the toughest times to get their kids to maintain good oral health habits.<sup>1</sup> But don't get spooked, Delta Dental of Illinois offers parents some tricks and the top treats to keep kids' teeth safe from sugary nightmares.

"Sugary treats aren't good for teeth, but some are better than others," said Dr. Sheila Strock, vice president, dental services and science officer at Delta Dental of Illinois. "Candy that melts and dissolves quickly is least harmful to kids' teeth. Sweets that expose teeth to sugar longer allow more time for bacteria to feed and produce cavity-causing acid."

If an option, sugar-free candy and gum are obvious top choices. Chocolate without sticky fillings is also a better choice than other treats, especially dark chocolate which is lower in sugar than milk or white chocolate. Chocolate dissolves quickly and is not sticky, which decreases the amount of time sugar stays in contact with teeth. The worst treats for teeth are chewy and hard candies, such as caramels, gummies, jawbreakers and lollipops, because they are likely to spend a longer time exposing teeth to sugar.

Along with choosing dark chocolate and sugar-free treats, Delta Dental of Illinois offers these five tricks to make your Halloween tooth-friendly.

1. **Serve a healthy and filling meal before trick-or-treating** so kids will be less tempted to binge on candy.
2. **Limit how many chewy and hard candies are eaten.** If possible, remove the hard and chewy candies from your kid's stash. Hard candies are tough on teeth because they tend to be sucked

on at a leisurely pace for an extended period of time. Chewy, sticky treats are 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.

3. **Only give candy with meals.** It's best to enjoy sweets with a meal, because saliva production increases and washes away cavity-causing sugar and bacteria. Try not to let kids snack on candy throughout the day.
4. **Have a post-treat oral health routine.** Kids' teeth should be brushed or at least rinsed with water after eating treats to wash away sugar. Make sure kids' teeth are brushed at least twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste for two minutes each time and flossed once a day. And trips to the dentist should be made regularly.
5. **Give a non-candy treat.** Let kids enjoy a treat or two and then trade in their remaining candy for a toy. Leftover treats can be donated to troops or a local dentist buy-back program. You could also consider handing out candy alternatives such as fruit, money or small toys to neighborhood kids.

For more tips to keep kids' teeth healthy during Halloween and all year long, visit Delta Dental of Illinois' oral health resource at [YourOralHealthHub.com](http://YourOralHealthHub.com).

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

*Delta Dental of Illinois is a not-for-profit dental service corporation that provides dental benefit programs to individuals and more than 5,500 employee groups throughout Illinois. Delta Dental of Illinois covers 2 million individuals, employees and family members nationwide. Delta Dental of Illinois is based in Naperville, Illinois and offers single-site administration and client services.*

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<sup>1</sup>Kelton, a leading global insights firm, conducted the 2017 Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey. Interviews were conducted statewide via email with 155 Illinois parents of children ages 12 and under. For results based on the total sample of Illinois adults, the margin of error is +/- 7.9% at a 95 percent confidence level.