

# News Release

## For Immediate Release

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### **To Teeth, Sugar in Halloween Candy Really Not That Scary** *Everyday nutrition, bad oral health habits more likely to cause damage*

You think Halloween candy is scary when it comes to keeping teeth healthy? After learning how much sugar there is in some common food items, you might want to think about what your children are eating the rest of the year.

Oral health experts long ago identified sugar as the monster behind tooth decay and cavities. If not removed by brushing or some other means, naturally occurring bacteria in the human mouth form a colorless, sticky film called plaque. Cavity-causing organisms within plaque feed on sugar and turn it into acid. This acid attacks tooth enamel and causes tooth decay.

But many common foods contain amounts of sugar at or above the amount in Halloween candy. These culprits can include breakfast items, snacks and drinks.

“To help keep teeth healthy, we need to be aware of what we eat and take care of them all year long, and not just worry about candy and Halloween,” said Mark Nielsen, DDS, a dental consultant for Delta Dental of South Dakota.

Popular Halloween treats include bite-sized chocolate-peanut-caramel bars, individually wrapped peanut butter cups and single servings of gummy bears. According to the nutrition facts printed on their packaging, the amount of sugar in these confections is 8.5 grams, 10 grams and 24 grams respectively.

When compared with the sugar content of common meals and snacks, these sugar levels might not be such a big departure from what your children are eating on an occasional or regular basis.

According to nutritional information published by their manufacturers, a breakfast of two frozen waffles topped with syrup, and a glass of orange juice serves up approximately 65 grams of sugar. A packet of two frosted strawberry toaster pastries has 34 grams of sugar, while a fruit punch flavored juice box contains 24 grams of sugar. Suddenly Halloween candy doesn't look so scary. Besides, Halloween only occurs once a year. The sugars in everyday foods get a chance to feed the cavity-causing bacteria far more often.

Regardless of the source of sugar, the consistency of foods can also play a role in tooth decay. Sticky caramels and lollipops that children and adults have in their mouths for a long time expose teeth to sugars for longer than quickly eaten candy bars or breakfast items.

“Brushing teeth after meals or at least twice a day is far more important to preventing tooth decay than avoiding Halloween candy or popular food items. Along with flossing at least once a day and visiting the dentist regularly, good oral hygiene is the best choice for protecting teeth and gums,” Dr. Nielsen said.

Delta Dental of South Dakota is an oral health company specializing in providing dental benefits programs to more than 1,400 employer groups throughout South Dakota.

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