



MELBA Z. MAYES, D.D.S., M.S.

PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

2140 GRAND AVENUE, SUITE 200 • CHINO HILLS, CALIFORNIA 91709

(909) 548-4044 • (909) 548-0848 FACSIMILE

American Academy of  
Pediatric Dentistry

California Society of  
Pediatric Dentistry

American Dental  
Association

California Dental  
Association

Tri-County Dental  
Society

## TIPS FOR PROTECTING KIDS' TEETH AT HALLOWEEN

Halloween is just around the corner. If recent buying trends hold, Americans will buy twenty million pounds of candy corn alone--about a half-pound for each trick-or-treater. That's before they get to the chocolate bars, lollipops, and other treats. According to some studies, this means that the average child will consume about three cups of sugar from Halloween candy. Sugar is known to cause hyperactivity in children and dental caries, as well as mood swings and obesity. How do you protect your child's teeth hold up against this sugary onslaught?

Perhaps the best thing a parent can do is reduce the sugar overload in the first place. One possibility would be to do something different, like a Halloween party at home or a costume trip to a movie instead of trick-or-treating. Or, instead of candy, give toys, removable tattoos, stickers, apples, or mini boxes of raisins. Ultimately, the best trick is to moderate children's intake of sweets and make sure they stick to their brushing-and-flossing routine.

Here are some other tips to encourage good dental-care habits at Halloween and during the weeks after:

- Serve healthy meals. A good meal before leaves less room for sweets.
- Set up a candy "bank". Allow your child two or three pieces of candy, then store the rest in a sealed container where children can't get to. Establish times when the "bank" will be open for withdrawals over the next month, preferably after lunch or dinner.
- "Borrow" some of your child's candy. Don't forget you can freeze chocolates and candy bars.
- Make sure candy is age-appropriate. Don't give children ages five and under jawbreakers or hard candies. These can chip teeth or even cause choking.
- Toss out the sticky and hard candies, which can damage braces and pull out fillings and crowns. Just remember that although treats like dried fruit might be more nutritious than gummy candy, both hold decay-producing acid against teeth.
- Encourage kids to drink water throughout the day (especially after eating sweets). It will help rinse sugar away from teeth until there is time for proper brushing.
- Brush and floss your child's teeth before bedtime (if under the age of 8). If children are older than 8, supervise their brushing activities.

---

*This article first appeared in the October 2005 issue of West Coast Magazine*