

Halloween Snack Tips

Halloween kicks off the beginning of the holiday season. Thanksgiving is just around the corner, then Christmas, New Years and Valentines Day. These holidays increase the consumption of sweets in the diets of our children.

I have personally witnessed this in my dental practice. I have seen children come in after school with candy treats several weeks before the actual Halloween Holiday. Increases in sugar in children's diets, can disrupt the normal eating habits. Research has shown that children will avoid healthy food and opt for the sweeter tasting foods.

This increase in the frequency of consumption of sweets most certainly affects the teeth. The bacteria producing acid that causes cavities relies on sugar. The more frequently the teeth are exposed to sugar the more acid is produced eroding the enamel occurs. If sweet consumption is allowed it should be limited to once a day. This way the bacteria are allowed to utilize the sugar from that sweet only once. The best snacks are those that don't contain sugar or if they do contain sugar they pass through the mouth quickly. Treats such as lollipops, popsicles, or sticky or gummy type candies are the most damaging to the teeth.

Recent research has documented that Xylitol, which is a sweetener, helps prevent tooth decay by disabling the bacteria that causes acid that causes cavities. Candies and gums that containing 100% Xylitol are the most desirable treats because they can actually inhibit decay.

During the holiday season it is difficult to completely eliminate sweets from your child's diet, because they are offered in so many different circumstances. A parent can help reduce the consumption of sweets by substituting sweet foods that are normally offered. For example,

substitute cereal with non sugar containing food like eggs. Also, limit their sweet liquid consumption like juices and soft drinks. Offer water and milk instead because it is very difficult to totally reduce intake of sweet during the holiday season. It is a very important time to keep up with your child's oral hygiene and prevent decay by being a little more conscientious about brushing and flossing during the holiday season.

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