

# Delta Dental Reveals Ways to Keep Tooth Decay at Bay This Halloween

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NAPERVILLE — While sugary treats contribute to tooth decay, some of those snack-sized candies — which have their roots in Illinois and are popular during Halloween — are less frightful for your teeth than the alternatives.

“Candy is a key part of both the Halloween tradition and Illinois’ history,” said Dr. Sheila Strock, vice president, dental services and science officer at Delta Dental of

Illinois. “But that doesn’t mean your little ghosts and goblins need to sacrifice their oral health as they celebrate the season.”

Chicago has been known as the “candy capital of the world” since the late 1800s. Several brand names of candy have their roots in the Windy City. Illinois also has a special connection with those individually packaged, snack-sized candies popular during Halloween. In fact, one candy company trademarked the term “fun size” in Illinois in 1971.

With such a rich tradition connecting Illinois with Halloween and candy, it may be unrealistic to avoid sweets altogether. So this year, choose chocolates that don’t have caramel, nougat or other sticky fillings, which aren’t as scary for your smile.

“Plain chocolate is a good choice because it melts quickly, which limits the time it stays in contact with your teeth,” Strock said. “Dark chocolate is an especially good option because it has less sugar than milk or white chocolate.”

Tooth decay is largely preventable but is one of the most chronic diseases in the country. An estimated 1 in 5 Illinois third-grade children have untreated tooth decay. And candy is often the culprit. More than one-third of Illinois parents say their children’s oral health isn’t as good as it could be because they eat too many sweets. Bacteria in the mouth feed on sugar from candy — creating acids that destroy tooth enamel and cause cavities.

To keep tooth decay at bay, Delta Dental of Illinois recommends avoiding chewy candies such as caramel, gummies and taffy that stick to your teeth and give sugar more time to do damage. Stay away from hard candy such as lollipops and jawbreakers, which expose your mouth to sugar for prolonged periods. And know that sour candies and tarts are among the worst for your teeth, because they’re packed with both sugar and acid that can erode tooth enamel.

Parents can also help to prevent cavities this Halloween by:

- Handing out non-candy treats such as bubbles, glow sticks, stickers, bouncy balls, temporary tattoos, pencils or erasers to trick-or-treaters.
- Having your little monsters eat a meal before trick-or-treating to keep them from filling up on the candies they collect.
- Choosing dark or milk chocolate over hard or sticky candy because they are less likely to cling to your children’s teeth.

- Washing away sugar by having your children brush their teeth, rinse with water or chew sugar-free gum after eating sugary treats.

For more tips on how to keep teeth healthy all year long, visit "Your Health" at [Deltadentalil.com](http://Deltadentalil.com).

## About Delta Dental of Illinois

Delta Dental is the national dental benefits leader covering 1 in 3 Americans who have dental insurance. Delta Dental of Illinois is one of 39 member companies that make up the national Delta Dental system. Based in Naperville, Illinois, Delta Dental of Illinois provides dental benefit programs to more than 6,000 Illinois companies and covers 2 million individuals, employees and family members nationwide. Delta Dental of Illinois is committed to improving oral health in our community and furthers this commitment through the work of Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation.