

## [Protect Your Child's Teeth This Halloween](#)

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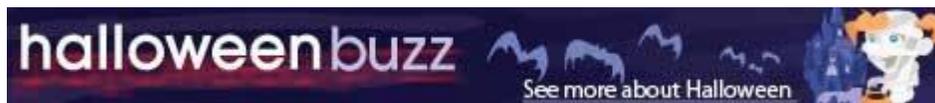


Photo by [Heather F](#)

On [Halloween](#), the day of über [candy intake](#), and every day that your child has sweets or, you know, regular food, it's good to think about how to protect those small teeth — yes, even the [baby teeth](#). Tooth decay is not our friend.

Click through for some special dental health tips.

When my oldest son was five years old, he had to have a decayed tooth extracted. It was a pretty horrific experience for us as parents and for him too, especially so early on in his dental history.

I blame raisins (boy, did he love them!), really close teeth, and genetics. We always [brushed his teeth](#) (but hardly flossed), and he had been to the dentist just six months prior and had a clean checkup.

Here are some tips from **Dr. Margaret Mitchell, DDS**, owner of Mitchell Dental Spa, a dental facility in Chicago, for protecting your kids teeth at Halloween and — as I said before — every day:

- Avoid sticky candy such as taffy, gummy bears, caramel, etc. Sticky candy adheres to teeth and causes decay.
- Kids can eat candy ANYTIME, meaning there is not a *good* time of day/night to eat candy.

- Eat the candy quickly in one sitting to decrease the amount of time it is contact with the teeth. Avoid eating any candy slowly over an extended time or over multiple sittings. Recent studies have shown that length of time eating a sweet can be more harmful than the amount of sweet consumed. This means hard candies, breath mints, etc. (long residence time in the mouth) can actually be worse for your teeth than a chocolate candy bar (shorter residence time in the mouth).
- Avoid sugary [sodas](#). They are: 1) loaded with sugar (often over 10 teaspoons per 12 ounce serving), 2) acidic enough to dissolve away tooth enamel, and 3) often sipped for long periods of time, resulting in teeth that are being bathed with sugar and acid almost continuously throughout the day.
- Prior to Halloween, visit your dentist to have sealants put into your child's teeth grooves.
- Brush immediately after eating candy, especially sticky candy so the impact of the candy on the teeth is minimal.

If brushing soon after eating is not possible, then try the following:

- Consume the candy with a meal. The increased saliva production while eating will help wash the sweet off the teeth.
- Rinse the mouth with water.
- Chew a sugarless gum (especially those containing xylitol) after snacking on candy. The increased saliva from chewing will help wash the sugar off the teeth, and xylitol gums help control the bacteria that cause tooth decay. Orbit and Trident both have xylitol sweetener.