



7 TIPS

FOR A



HEALTHY HALLOWEEN

Dr. Majella Caven of Anchor Family Dentistry in Commerce Township offers advice on keeping your child's smile healthy.

By Stacey Winconek

Donning Halloween costumes and trekking around the neighborhood collecting candy is a tradition that most children look forward to each year.

However, the cavities that can come along with that candy are something that parents dread. As a mom of four sons, Dr. Majella Caven, DDS with Anchor Family Dentistry in Commerce Township, knows how hard it is to keep a child's smile healthy while allowing him or her to indulge during Halloween.

So, how can it be done? Here, Dr. Caven offers seven tips for keeping your child's teeth healthy this Halloween – and all year round.

1

AVOID SNACKING ON SWEETS

"Constant snacking throughout the day is detrimental to your dental health," Dr. Caven says.

In fact bacteria feed on refined sugars from candy, releasing acids, which breakdown the enamel surface causing tooth decay, and other gum issues. This is why it's so important to limit sugars to roughly once per week, she says.

"You don't want to deprive (kids), but make sure that it's not a constant thing," she says. "And after having candy, make sure they're drinking some water to wash off that sugar that lingers on your teeth."

2

CHOOSE THE 'RIGHT' CANDY

Though there are no real "healthy"

Halloween candy, lower sugar options such as Smarties and dark chocolate are a better choice. Stay away from the sticky stuff- such as gummy bears that can get stuck in the grooves of the molars and hard candy that can actually break teeth.

3

DRINK WATER

"I would suggest adding some natural fruits. Maybe adding some cucumber or strawberries inside to make it more flavorful."

Instead of juice, give your children water with every meal, she adds.

4

CHEW SUGARLESS GUM

For older kids, she recommends sugarless gums as a safer on teeth option.

"Chewing gum helps to stimulate saliva which neutralizes acid from bacteria and washes away food debris," Dr. Caven notes, Just don't swallow it.

5

OPT FOR XYLITOL TREATS AND CANDY

"We have lollipops that utilize xylitol as a sweetener," Dr. Caven says. "One of the reasons why it's very good is because it's also very difficult for the bacteria to digest the xylitol."

Zollipops, which were created by a southeast Michigan kidpreneur, are among Dr. Caven's sons' favorite xylitol treats, she says.

6

DONATE YOUR HALLOWEEN CANDY

Each year Anchor Family Dentistry hosts a candy buy back event after Halloween. The event, which is open to everyone in the community, allows families to donate their additional candy. Anchor Family Dentistry buys back candy up to 5 pounds as well as offers fun and healthy treats to kids. The candy is then sent with care packages to the troops through Operation Gratitude.

"The rational is to give them (the troops) a feeling of being back home" she adds.

7

BRUSH AND FLOSS

When it comes to brushing, Dr. Caven encourages parents to

"tell, show and do." Tell children how to do it, show them how to do it and watch as they brush and floss.

"Brushing your teeth at least twice a day is important, as well as flossing areas the toothbrush can't reach," Dr. Caven says.

Children should brush their teeth at least twice per day – and aim to floss their teeth with both brush sessions, especially once their back molars are touching. Opt for easier-to-manage floss sticks for your children.

It's not easy to get kids to brush their teeth, but Dr. Caven has found that electric toothbrushes have made tooth-brushing sessions much easier with her own children. "Let them play and brush," she says.

"Look for ways to make it fun. Get a fun toothbrush with a character," she suggests, to get them excited about using it.