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Halloween candy is delicious, but lollipops and sticky taffy bars are the worst for your teeth

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Halloween is all sorts of fun for young kids - but can be a headache for their parents.

BY Jane Ridley

When your parent is a dentist, it goes with the territory. Every Halloween, the sons of Dr. Timothy Chase dutifully tip out their buckets of treats for him to inspect. He separates the "good candy" from the "bad candy", and the nasties get thrown out. "I'm not adverse to candy, but we can make smarter choices about it," says Chase, a dad of three, whose cosmetic dentistry practice is based on Manhattan's upper East Side.

HEALTHY SNACKS TIP

"Fruit is better than candy any time, but try telling that to a child! Instead, you can limit it and choose better options."

Not all Halloween candy is created equal. Certain types can be completely detrimental to children's teeth, accelerating their chance of cavities - while others are less of a threat. "Super-sticky taffy bars the ones where you can't get your jaws apart from chewing are the worst," says Dr. Chase. Meanwhile, the candy sticks to all the nooks and crannies in your teeth, allowing the bacteria that resides in the mouth to feast on the residue for an extended amount of time. Even if you have the child brush, there's a good chance that remnants are going to stay on. If it's chewy, has a high sugar content or is colored in a way you'd never see naturally, it's going to be bad news. Gob-stoppers and blow pops are similarly evil, along with powdery treats like Pixie Stix, which are unadulterated sugar. Gummi Bears, Twizzlers, Tootsie Rolls, Skittles and lollipops are all candies which stay in the mouth for a long time - carry the same warning. According to Chase, a lesser evil would be a plain chocolate candy, such as a Hershey kiss, because the sugary residue is more likely to wash away with the mouth's saliva. "Something as simple as a Kit Kat is also a smarter choice, because it's basically chocolate over a cookie base," he adds. Then there's the option of sugar-free gum as well as ice cream (half sugar varieties are best), which, for obvious reasons, doesn't hang around for long.

As a father who knows only too well why kids love Halloween, Chase recognizes that you don't want to be cast as a party-poop. "Everything in moderation is okay," he concedes. Two or three candies after dinner are fine as long as they brush straight after. If it's during the day and brushing isn't so easy, give them some water to rinse out the mouth.

"Slices of apple will help dislodge any residue." But no matter how independent your tots claim to be, resist the urge to allow them to brush by themselves.