

AAPD Offers Halloween Tooth To-Dos For A Fun and Healthy Holiday

CHICAGO, Oct. 4, 2011 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- With 41 million U.S. "trick-or-treaters" hitting the pavement in 2010 (ages five to fourteen), the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), the recognized leader in children's dental and oral health, knows Halloween can be a frightful time for tiny teeth, from lost sealants and fillings, to damaged brackets and even broken teeth.

As Halloween approaches, the AAPD is offering key recommendations and tips to parents and caregivers on maintaining healthy teeth for this holiday and throughout the year, to ensure that jack-o-lanterns are the only ones with decaying teeth after October 31st:

Establish Health Habits: First and foremost, parents and caregivers need to be aware of and take care of their own oral health. Good eating habits and oral health routines, as well as seeing the dentist on a regular basis, will go a long ways towards ensuring that children maintain solid oral health practices.

Brush Before (and After): Tooth decay and cavities occur when sugar reacts to bacteria and dental plaque. Brushing before candy consumption reduces the amount of bacteria and plaque on the teeth. Most importantly, parents and caregivers should help young children with the process.

"Children really can't brush by themselves unless they can do one of three things: they can write cursive, they can tie their shoe or they can cut up a steak on a plate," stated Dr. Rhea M. Haugseth, President of the AAPD. "Children younger than eight or nine-years-old usually don't have the manual dexterity to brush or floss properly, so plan to keep a hand in the process for at least that long."

Hard Candy, Hard Time: Parents and caregivers should not only monitor the amount of sugar a child consumes, but also how long they keep sweet treats in their mouths. Kids should eat the candy right away, limit chewy candies that stick to teeth, as well as hard candies, which will be slowly eaten.

Fight with Fluoride and Flossing: Fluoride has been shown to reduce tooth decay by as much as 50 percent, and flossing may help prevent gum disease and tooth decay in between teeth. Teach children to brush twice daily with a fluoridated toothpaste and floss once a day as soon as the first two teeth come into contact.

Monitor Candy Consumption: There are two recommended options. Keep candy consumption limited to a few pieces a day given with a meal or a snack. Alternatively, have the child eat whatever the amount the adult decides at one setting, and then have the child brush their teeth afterwards and give or donate the remaining candy. Remember, a balanced diet is one that includes cheese, fruits, vegetables, grains, lean meat, milk and yogurt. Dr. Haugseth recommends three meals and three snacks a day.

Don't be afraid of the dentist: With all of the sweet treats consumed around Halloween, now is a great time for parents and caregivers to schedule a pediatric dental appointment for their children. Children should visit the dentist every six months for a check-up to avoid dental problems and keep smiles healthy.

For more helpful tips to ensure that your family enjoys a fun and healthy Halloween, please visit www.aapd.org .

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

Founded in 1947, the AAPD is a not-for-profit membership organization representing the specialty of pediatric dentistry. AAPD's 8,000 members are predominately pediatric dentists and primary care providers who deliver comprehensive specialty treatments for infants, children, adolescents and individuals with special health care needs. As advocates for children's oral health, the AAPD aims to promote the use of evidence-based policies and guidelines, foster research concerning pediatric oral health, and educate health care providers and the public to improve children's oral health. For further information, please visit the AAPD website at www.aapd.org .

SOURCE American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry