

# THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

Take the fear out of the spookiest month of the year by following some tips for choosing the most tooth-friendly candy, visiting the dentist without anxiety and learning not-so-scary truth about X-rays and radiation exposure.

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

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## Take the Scare Out of Dental X-rays



Dentists typically use X-rays to take a closer look at teeth and bones, allowing them to better investigate dental issues not evident to the naked eye. <sup>1</sup> X-rays use radiation to capture those images, and you've probably heard that radiation can be harmful to your health – but you don't have to be spooked.

Not only is the amount of radiation used to take X-rays relatively low; dentists employ several safeguards to protect patients from unnecessary exposure. Before an X-ray, your hygienist will give you a lead collar and apron to wear. <sup>2</sup> This blocks radiation from contact with other parts of your body. Your dental office should be using X-ray equipment with high-speed film, which creates the image more quickly, further reducing radiation exposure. <sup>3</sup> Your dentist could also be using digital X-ray technology, which requires as little as 10 to 20 percent of the radiation needed to create traditional film X-rays. <sup>4</sup>

X-ray schedules are customized to fit individual needs. Avoiding X-rays could result in an inaccurate diagnosis or incomplete treatment due to lack of knowledge about the problem. Your dentist should examine your mouth first and only order those images that are essential for making a proper diagnosis.

It's a good idea to ask for a copy of your X-rays if you decide to change dentists or need to see a specialist. Having current X-rays available will prevent duplication of existing films and cut down on your exposure to radiation.

If you have any concerns about X-rays or radiation, be sure to discuss them with your dentist. For more information, visit the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) website for the FDA/American Dental Association guidelines. <sup>5</sup>

# Don't Fear the Dentist



**If dentists are just as scary to you as the ghosts, goblins and vampires that lurk around every corner this time of year, you're not alone.**

Whether it's due to a bad experience in the past or simply fear of pain, more than 20 million Americans avoid going to the dentist because they're scared. <sup>6</sup> The good news: There are steps you can take to lessen your anxiety.

First of all, dental technology and pain management have made great strides in the past decade. Having cavities filled and even getting root canals are practically pain-free. <sup>7</sup>

Additionally, most dentists know that visits to the dental chair aren't a walk in the park for everyone, and they can take steps to make you feel more at home. From TVs in the exam room to aromatherapy and relaxing spa-like treatments, many dental offices have amenities that may even make you look forward to your visits.

You can also take some steps to calm yourself before an appointment:

- Choose a dentist you like and trust, or get recommendations from friends and family.
- Eat a high-protein meal before you go - protein has a calming effect on your mood. <sup>8</sup>
- Avoid sugar and caffeine, which may make you feel more jittery and anxious.
- Concentrate on keeping your breathing slow and regular. We tend to hold our breath when we're tense, which decreases oxygen levels in the blood and can make us feel more anxious. <sup>8</sup>
- If your dentist doesn't provide TV or radio in the office, bring your own music and a pair of headphones, so you can close your eyes and zone out during your appointment.

Finally, if you have a fear of the dentist, don't let your kids know. Children can pick up on your emotions, and they may develop a fear of the dentist even if they haven't had a negative experience.

# SMILE STATS



84% of Americans say their children participate in Halloween. <sup>9</sup>



Children laugh about 400 times per day, while adults only laugh about 15 times. <sup>10</sup>



Some people in medieval England believed witches used baby teeth to control children. <sup>11</sup>

# How Do Your Sweets Stack Up?



Halloween is one of the spookiest holidays for teeth – but all candies are not equally frightful. Some of the sweets in your children’s treat bags have the potential to do more damage to teeth than others. We rated the harmfulness of the most popular treats on teeth:



**Sugar-free gum:** As long as it doesn’t contain sugar, gum can be good for your smile. It stimulates saliva production, which helps fight dry mouth and rinses away food particles. <sup>12</sup>



**Dark chocolate:** Chocolate is a better choice than most candy because saliva is able to rinse it from teeth relatively easily. <sup>13</sup> Because it has less sugar than milk chocolate, dark chocolate is your best bet.



**Milk chocolate:** Milk chocolate is a close second to dark, but avoid any with caramel, nougat and other sticky fillings.



**Lollipops:** Candies designed to be sucked on for long periods of time bathe your teeth in a sugary solution. <sup>14</sup>



**Candy corn:** The sticky sugars in candy corn will cling to teeth long after the treat is gone.



**Gummy candy:** Gummy candies can also get stuck to and in between teeth. This feeds the decay-causing bacteria for a long time and can lead to cavities.



**Caramel:** Not only are caramels and toffees sticky, they can also pull out fillings! <sup>15</sup>



**Jawbreakers:** Like lollipops, jawbreakers are designed to expose teeth to sugar over a long period of time. Plus, crunching down on a hard object is bad news for teeth! They’re called jawbreakers for a reason.



**Sour and tart candies:** Acidic candies provide a one-two punch: They wear down enamel and are loaded with sugar – the perfect recipe for decay.

Regardless of what kind of candy you and your children indulge in this Halloween, you can minimize the damage by eating sweets with meals. <sup>16</sup> The extra saliva generated while eating helps wash the stickiness and sugars away. A glass of water after eating can assist as well. And, of course, brushing and flossing before bed is the best way to keep the plaque monsters at bay. Have a happy Halloween!

# MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: CELERY MUMMIES

<p><b>Ingredients:</b></p>	<p><b>Directions:</b></p>
	<p>Directions: Spread 1 tablespoon cream</p>
<p>Celery, cut into 2" sticks</p>	<p>cheese into each celery stick. Arrange</p>
	<p>the thin strips of deli meat in a crisscross</p>
<p>Garden vegetable cream cheese</p>	<p>pattern on top of the cream cheese to resemble a mummy's wrappings. Optional: Use tiny pieces of carrot, olive or pepper to make eyes that peek out.</p>
	
<p>Deli turkey, cut into thin strips</p>	

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[deltadentalazblog.com](http://deltadentalazblog.com)



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## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.deltadentalins.com/oral\\_health/xrays.html](https://www.deltadentalins.com/oral_health/xrays.html)

<sup>2</sup><http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/Search/22,HD15>

<sup>3</sup><http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/Search/22,HD15>

<sup>4</sup>Delta Dental, Dental X-Ray Safety

<sup>5</sup><http://www.fda.gov/Radiation-EmittingProducts/RadiationEmittingProductsandProcedures/MedicalImaging/MedicalX-Rays/ucm116504.htm>

<sup>6</sup><http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/Search/22,21443>

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<sup>10</sup><http://stress.about.com/od/stresshealth/a/laughter.htm>

<sup>11</sup>[http://www.juniordentist.com/some-interesting-facts-in-dentistry.html/comment-page-1?wpmu\\_switcher=mobile&wpmu\\_tp=3](http://www.juniordentist.com/some-interesting-facts-in-dentistry.html/comment-page-1?wpmu_switcher=mobile&wpmu_tp=3)

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