



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

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#### **Halloween: A Dentist's Dilemma**

*Delta Dental Survey Asks Dentists How Kids Can Enjoy Treats and Still Avoid Oral Health Tricks*

**DENVER (Oct. 15, 2012)** – How do dentists confront the professional quandary that is Halloween? Delta Dental of Colorado was curious and found that approaches vary depending on the dentist.

Delta Dental's recent [Tricky Treats](#) survey of more than 250 dentists found that nearly one out of four dentists said they do not hand out anything on Halloween, while five percent attack the holiday head on by handing out toothbrushes.<sup>1</sup> Still, 60 percent indicate that they give out candy.

“We have some professional conflict with Halloween, but dentists know that holiday snacks are a fact of life,” said Dr. Michael Makoto Okuji, DDS, dental director for Delta Dental of Colorado. “The emphasis on candy at Halloween makes it a particularly good time to also stress good oral health and how to limit the damage of sugary snacks.”

Of the dentists who hand out candy, 79 percent choose chocolate, while just 13 percent hand out varieties like hard candy or lollipops. And there's a good reason for this confectionery choice. When it comes to teeth and sugar, it's really a matter of time. Chocolate dissolves quickly in the mouth and can be eaten easily, which decreases the amount of time sugar stays in contact with teeth. Tooth decay occurs when candy and other sweets mix with bacteria in the sticky plaque that constantly forms on teeth to produce acid, which can wear away enamel. Chewy, sticky treats are particularly damaging because not only are they high in sugar, but they spend a prolonged amount of time stuck to teeth and are more difficult for saliva to break down. Hard candies are tough on teeth as well because kids tend to suck on them at a leisurely pace for an extended period of time.

Delta Dental of Colorado offers these additional tricks for dealing with Halloween treats:

- Try to ensure children eat a good, hearty meal prior to trick-or-treating, so there will be less temptation to gorge on candy.
- Promote good oral health care habits to your children year-round by encouraging twice daily brushing with fluoridated toothpaste, daily flossing and regular dental checkups.

- Don't buy Halloween candy too far in advance to avoid the temptation for children (and adults) to get a head start on the splurge.

“At the end of the night, it's a good idea to remove the sticky, gummy and chewy choices from your child's candy haul,” Okuji said. “Limit the number of treats per day and reinforce the need for good oral hygiene. Before Halloween, ask your dentist about sealants to protect the decay-prone grooves in your child's molar teeth.”

To learn more about what dentists give out at Halloween and get their best advice for keeping kids' teeth healthy, please visit [www.trickytreats.org](http://www.trickytreats.org) or “like” Delta Dental of Colorado on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/DeltaDentalCO](http://www.facebook.com/DeltaDentalCO).

### ***About Delta Dental of Colorado***

*Delta Dental of Colorado is the largest and most experienced provider of dental benefits in the state. As a not-for-profit, Delta Dental of Colorado invests in oral health projects through the Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation that focus on access to care, prevention, education and research. The Colorado company is a member of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a national organization of not-for-profit Delta Dental plans. The national association is the largest dental benefits carrier in the nation providing coverage to more than 56 million people in nearly 95,700 employer groups.*

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<sup>1</sup> Delta Dental conducted the 2011 Tricky Treats Halloween survey. Delta Dental network dentists were invited via e-mail to participate in the web-based survey. For results based on the total sample of 253, the margin of error is  $\pm 6.15$  percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.