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Media Release

How Sweet It Is—Proper Dental Hygiene at Halloween

October 27, 2014 (Ottawa, ON) – Canada’s dental hygienists remind all ghosts and goblins preparing for a night of Halloween fun to be BEWARE of cavities on October 31 and beyond.

Halloween treats—particularly sticky and chewy candies—can get stuck in the grooves of teeth and increase risk of cavities and tooth decay. While no one wants to take the “treat” out of trick-or-treating, a little bit of restraint and advance planning can go a long way to maintaining children’s oral health. As Mandy Hayre, president of the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) explains, “Approximately 19,000 children under the age of 6 undergo day surgery each year to treat dental decay. The careful timing of treats and good oral hygiene habits can prevent tooth decay and help your child to have a cavity-free Halloween.” Here are some tips from Canadian dental hygienists for a tooth-friendly Halloween.

- Choose sugar-free candy and chewing gum, or chocolates and powdery candy (which dissolve quickly in the mouth) over lollipops or other hard treats. The less time that sugar is in contact with the teeth, the better. More tooth-friendly treat ideas can be found at mychildrensteeth.org
- Consider handing out small toys, stickers, temporary tattoos or glow sticks instead of candy.
- Set a daily limit on treats and remind children to brush their teeth before eating candy.
- Encourage children to drink a glass of water to rinse away the sugar after eating if brushing beforehand is not an option.
- Have your children eat their candy after a meal rather than as a mid-day snack.

Parents can continue to encourage good oral health after Halloween by celebrating National Brush Day on November 1. Instill good oral hygiene habits in children early. From the age of 1, children should brush their teeth with fluoride toothpaste for two minutes, twice a day; clean between their teeth; and brush their tongue. Hayre adds, “Parents should supervise their young children while they brush their teeth and remember to schedule visits with a dental hygienist for their children 1–2 times a year. Together, we can keep those smiles healthy!”

Serving the profession since 1963, CDHA is the collective national voice of more than 26,800 registered dental hygienists working in Canada, directly representing 17,000 individual members including dental hygienists and students. Dental hygiene is the 6th largest registered health profession in Canada with professionals working in a variety of settings, including independent practice, with people of all ages, addressing issues related to oral health. For more information on oral health, visit: www.dentalhygienecanada.ca.

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