



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Contacts:
Jennifer Pounders
for Delta Dental of Virginia
804-338-4514
pounderspr@verizon.net

Delta Dental Offers Tricks for Avoiding Scary Treats **When it comes to cavities, not all candy is created equal**

Roanoke, Va. (Oct. 12, 2010) – This year, Americans will spend close to \$9 billion on candy and in October a lot of that candy will end up on the teeth of trick-or-treating children. It’s important for parents to know that when it comes to cavities and teeth, not all candy is created equal.

“Cavities and tooth decay are caused by prolonged exposure to sugar,” said Dr. George Koumaras, DDS, dental director at Delta Dental of Virginia, the state’s largest dental benefits provider. “Parents can help their kids fight cavities by decreasing the amount of time sugar comes in contact with their teeth, as well as moderating the amount of candy they consume.”

Oral health experts have long identified sugar as a major cause of tooth decay and cavities. If not removed by brushing or some other means, naturally occurring bacteria in the mouth form a colorless, sticky film called plaque. Cavity-causing microorganisms within plaque feed on sugar and turn it into acid. This acid attacks tooth enamel and causes tooth decay.

Sticky or chewy candies result in sugar being in contact with teeth for longer periods of time. When children chew sticky candies, such as caramels or taffy, candy gets stuck on the surface and in between crevices, creating a fertile environment for decay-producing plaque.

Monitoring your child’s sugar intake and ensuring regular brushing habits to remove plaque will help prevent tooth decay this Halloween and make your child’s next visit to the dentist cavity-free.

Delta Dental of Virginia Offers Halloween Tips for Parents:

- Choose candy that can be eaten quickly and easily to limit the amount of time sugar is in contact with the teeth.
- Steer away from sticky candies like sugared fruit snacks, caramels, popcorn balls and other candies that expose the teeth to sugar for long periods of time.
- Encourage children to eat a small amount of candy in one sitting followed by a glass of water or a thorough tooth brushing.
- Encourage children to eat a good meal prior to trick-or-treating, so there will be less temptation to fill up on candy.
- Avoid buying Halloween candy too far ahead of time to remove the temptation for children (and adults) to dig in.
- Consider purchasing non-food treats for those who visit your home, such as coloring books or pens and pencils.
- Encourage brushing at least twice a day with a fluoridated toothpaste, flossing and regular dental checkups to help establish good oral health habits in children and to prevent cavities all year long.

Halloween is a great time for parents to think about their children's teeth, but oral health should be a lifelong concern. "Monitor your children's candy and sugar consumption year-round to prevent cavities and tooth decay. Even in baby teeth, oral infections can lead to further health problems if they go untreated," said Koumaras.

Regularly encourage good oral health habits with your children, including brushing at least twice a day, flossing and visiting the dentist every six months to ensure the sugary villains don't stick around on your children's teeth long after Halloween is over.

Delta Dental of Virginia, headquartered in Roanoke, was created in 1964 as a not-for-profit service corporation. Delta Dental provides employee dental benefits through a variety of managed fee-for-service and PPO plans covering more than 1.4 million enrollees in more than 3,500 groups. Delta Dental of Virginia is a member company of the Delta Dental Plans Association, the nation's largest, most experienced dental benefits carrier providing dental coverage to more than 54 million people in more than 93,000 groups across the nation.

#