

EDITORIAL

ISLAND VOICES

Column: Scare away cavities this Halloween

By Dr. Rachel DiPasquale

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It's spooky season once again! Not only because of the Halloween ghosts and ghouls, but also because of all the sweet treats that come with it.

Just because I'm a dentist does not automatically mean no candy. It's fine to celebrate and enjoy. My family does — both the adults and kids love it.

It does mean, however, making simple yet smart choices not only during Halloween but year-round.

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First and foremost, as with most things, moderation is key. This, combined with regular brushing and flossing, not only keeps mouths healthy but also helps kids establish good lifelong

habits.

When selecting candy to either eat or give away, try to avoid sticky, sour, and jawbreaker candies. Sticky candies in particular can damage sealants and crowns and is difficult to brush off because it gets stuck in cracks and crevices. While sour candies are delicious and fun to eat, the acid can eat away at your teeth's enamel. And jawbreakers, as the name implies, can hurt your jaw and chip your teeth.

But don't worry! One of the better candy choices is ... chocolate! That is, chocolate that doesn't have caramel or sticky candy in it. Milk chocolate does have more sugar than other types of chocolate so if you want to go for bonus points, stick with dark or semi-sweet chocolate. But again, moderation is key. A little chocolate never hurt anyone, and you heard that straight from a dentist's mouth!

Also, timing is everything. Did you know that the best time to enjoy candy is either with a meal or shortly after? This helps to stimulate more saliva which helps neutralize acids and wash away candy particles. It also helps to avoid snacking all day and minimizes the amount of time your teeth and gums are exposed to extra sugar and acids.

If you're eating multiple pieces of candy, it's important to finish within 20 minutes of eating the first piece. It takes 20 minutes for bacteria (which feeds on sugar) to secrete acid which causes cavities. Limiting the time your teeth are exposed to sugar by brushing and flossing, or at least drinking water after eating candy, is an easy way to protect your pearly whites.

After Halloween, what can you do with all that extra candy? Some local dentists have candy buyback programs, which you can take advantage of. Also, some local organizations such as churches and schools, as well as national organizations that



send care packages to military members serving overseas, accept candy donations. All are great options to help limit the number of tempting sweets laying around the house.

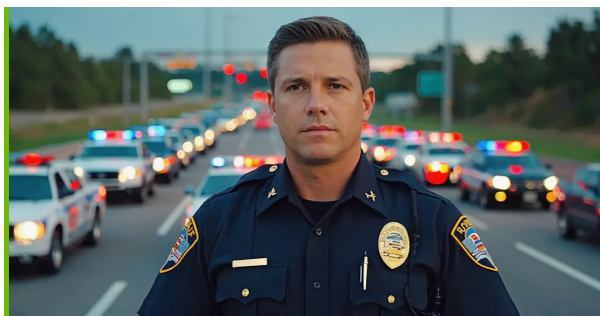
With these simple tips, you and your ohana can protect those smiles and are ready for a frightful Halloween.

For more healthy Halloween tips: check out the American Dental Association's Halloween Survival Guide online at 808ne.ws/Halloweencandy .

Dr. Rachel DiPasquale is 2025 president of the Hawaii Dental Association.



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