

October 2023

## Oral Wellness Newsletter



### Avoid tricks from Halloween treats

Halloween is the time of year when candy is everywhere, but there are things you can do to avoid an oral health nightmare for your little ones. Here are some helpful tips to ensure you and your children enjoy the holiday while taking care of your mouth:

- Stay away from sticky treats like gummy worms, licorice and taffy.
- Limit sugary drinks, including too much fruit juice.
- Think twice before picking hard candies like suckers, which take time to dissolve.

You can also hand out candy alternatives to trick-or-treaters. Temporary tattoos, mini card games, costume jewelry, playdough or mini-packs of crayons are all great options.

The American Dental Association's [Healthy Halloween Survival Guide](#) can help scare away the tricks that sugary treats play on children's teeth.



### What tooth did they take for the witches' brew in the movie **Halloweentown**?

- A. werewolf
- B. vampire
- C. human



### Know the risks before you pierce

When thinking about oral piercings — gum erosion, sensitive teeth, and tooth loss aren't typically top-of-mind — but they're just some of the risks associated with getting your lips, tongue or any part of your mouth pierced. That's why it's important to do your research and talk with your dentist before booking an appointment. If your oral modification isn't done correctly, it could cause bleeding, infection, chipped teeth, and possible nerve damage.<sup>1</sup>

What if you already have a mouth piercing? The [American Dental Association](#) recommends:

- Contacting your dentist or physician at once if you have any signs of infection.
- Keeping the piercing site clean and free of any matter that may collect on the jewelry.
- Trying to avoid clicking the jewelry against teeth and be aware of the piercing's movement when talking and chewing.
- Checking the tightness of your jewelry periodically to prevent dislodging.

- Removing the jewelry during a sporting activity and protecting your mouth with a mouthguard.
- Seeing your dentist regularly and remembering to brush twice a day and floss daily.

Don't pierce on a whim; [understand the risks](#).



## A smile starts with you

The first Friday in October each year marks World Smile Day! But did you know that one in four adults in the United States avoid smiling due to the condition of their mouth and teeth?<sup>2</sup> Because your smile is your personal logo, here are five tips to help you confidently show your pearly whites all year long:

1. **Visit the dentist regularly.**
2. **Try to destress.**
3. **Limit sugary drinks.**
4. **Get plenty of vitamin D.**
5. **Get enough sleep.**

Watch this [short video](#) to learn more and share these tips (and your smile) with a friend.



## The surprising connection between breast cancer and your oral health

Every year, people all over the world show their support for those affected by breast cancer. This is a time dedicated to educating everyone about the importance of early detection and preventive care, including the link between breast cancer and oral health.

Breast cancer survivors – especially chemotherapy patients – need to be aware that they are at a greater risk of tooth decay and other dental problems. More than one-third of people being treated for breast cancer can develop complications that affect their oral health.<sup>3</sup> The mouth is made up of cells that renew themselves daily, and because chemotherapy targets these types of cells, your mouth may be susceptible to damage. By setting up and practicing a good dental routine, you can decrease the side effects of treatment for breast cancer.

### Here are some helpful tips:

- Brush with a soft toothbrush to thoroughly clean your teeth and gums.
- Floss gently at least once a day.
- Only use alcohol-free mouthwash, preferably one free of saccharin but having xylitol.
- Avoid dental treatment for one week after chemotherapy.
- Use toothpaste and chewing gum that contain xylitol.
- If you wear dentures, make sure to keep them clean and remove at night.

To learn more, visit our [oral health resources](#) webpage, developed specifically to help those affected by breast cancer.

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## Holiday trivia answer: B

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### Sources:

[1] United Concordia Dental internal research and reports, 09/23.

[2] Oral Health and Well-Being in the United States; Health Policy Institute; American Dental Association, 2015. Retrieved June 2023.

[3] Breast cancer risk up to three times higher in women with gum disease; Oral Health Foundation, 2017. Retrieved September, 2023.

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