

Women's Health

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Keep Your Smile Healthy This Halloween

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THE BEAUTY LAB

I'm pretty sure everyone would agree with me when I say that teeth are pretty important. Even if they're not pin-straight, there's something endearing about a white, bright smile that doesn't have, like, 20 silver fillings. Right? Right.



So, in honor of Oral Hygiene Month (and Halloween—what a coincidence!), let me break down a healthy smile for you: In order to keep your teeth intact and cavity-free, impeccable oral hygiene and a healthy diet are musts. That means brushing, flossing, and rinsing at least twice daily, and minimizing sugar intake. I don't know about you, but the latter is no easy feat for me. I'm a candy addict who is currently experiencing the most challenging time of the year: Halloween. Well, according to Timothy Chase, DMD, a cosmetic dentist in New York City, some candies are more taxing on your teeth than others. Here's a list of where your favorite sweets stack up:

The Good

Fruit: Sugar is sugar is sugar (it all does the same thing to your teeth) but nature's candy packs more nutritional value than sweets that you unwrap.

Sugar-free gum: It shares an aisle with the Swedish Fish in Duane Reade, but I'd hardly call this stuff "candy." In any case, it contains xylitol, a natural sugar that minimizes bacteria and prevents cavities.

The OK

Chocolate: With no sticky fillings, the dark stuff won't adhere to your teeth. I think I just heard a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup calling my name!

The Bad

White powdery candy, like Pixi Stix: This stuff dissolves quickly in the mouth and doesn't require chewing. However, they're 100% pure sugar and increase the acidity of your mouth (bacteria plus acid equals a mouth full of cavities)

Hard candy: Although they don't stick to your mouth, they take a long time to dissolve. The longer a food stays in your mouth, the more acidic the environment becomes.

The Ugly

Caramel-filled concoctions or anything chewy, like candy corn or gummy worms: This (delicious) stuff sticks to every groove in your mouth for along time, making it a breeding ground for bacteria. Plus, it might take numerous brushings and a good flossing session to remove. You decide if it's worth it.

The Bottom Line?

Enjoy your treats, but undo the damage immediately afterwards with a good, thorough brushing and flossing, and use a whitening toothpaste to offset stains from all that yummy chocolate. One of my favorites: **Colgate Optic White Toothpaste**, \$5, at drugstores. Trick or treat!