



Halloween is coming! Have you heard of the "Three Day Rule"?

The objective of this rule is to allow your child to join in the merriment of Halloween without causing a lot of dental problems. The worst thing a child can do with his or her Halloween candy is to save it and eat small portions each day for several weeks or months. This daily dose of sugar will raise the bacterial count in the mouth tremendously.

Unsweetened foods need to be converted into simple sugars by salivary enzymes before bacteria can consume it. But, food such as candy that is already a simple sugar can be immediately consumed by bacteria. So, when it's eaten, the bacteria in your mouth are given a dose of nourishment, which sets off a round of cell division, multiplying the numbers of bacteria. If candy is eaten every day, this quickly gets out of hand, and it's no wonder that decay occurs.

The Three Day Rule

When the kids return with their Halloween candy, they can eat as much of it as they like before bed that night, and as much as they like whenever they want to for two days after Halloween. (Sounds pretty disgusting, doesn't it?) Then before bed on that third day, (Halloween plus two days) the children must hand over any remaining candy for discarding. There is rarely any left.

Why is this good?

1. The bacterial count has been raised for a short time - not long enough for a cavity to form. After the three days it can slide back to normal.
2. You have avoided the stigma of prohibition.
3. You have allowed the child to experience overindulgence and the discomfort or even revulsion that accompanies it.
4. You have avoided all that nagging, and those self doubts about the quality of your parenthood.

An aside about Halloween: If you live in an area where children can actually go to private residences to trick or treat consider these further guidelines:

Trick or Treating is for the little ones. Start programming your children early that after the age of ten he or she will probably be the one to give the candy at the door rather than roam the neighborhood.

One parent should always go with the kids trick or treating. How else can you know where they go to get their treats? Only let the kids go to houses where you actually know the people living there. This not only lets you not worry about the safety of any of the treats, but it keeps the child from going on a crazy quest for unbelievable quantities of candy.

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