

## Holiday Treats...

Ever since we rounded the corner past Halloween, there have been growing stacks of junk food around our home and office. What started innocently as a bowl of candy corn fall decor has steadily grown to a pantry full of chocolate covered this and that. Christmas tins of treats are beginning to be found throughout the land. Despite my insistence that I do not like sweets, I somehow manage to consume enough extra calories around the holidays to motivate another New Year's worth of weight loss goals. Thank God for facial hair to hide my extra chins.

With all this temptation, you'd think it might be easy to cause damage to our mouths. Luckily for us, as well as old Saint Nick, a few nights of milk and cookies will not immediately rot out your teeth. With healthy salivary flow, the bacteria in your mouth need both time (usually months) and food (sweets, sticky carbohydrate foods, sodas, etc.) to actually dissolve holes (cavities) into your teeth. Therefore, a few holiday transgressions can usually be overcome.

With that in mind, everyday steps can be taken to avoid a holiday root canal. Here are the usual suspects, garnished with a holiday twist.

Brush after every meal. Grandma's famous super sticky bun cinnamon flavored candy has a tendency to get stuck into the grooves and pits of your teeth. The longer it's there, the more time your bacterial friends have to turn that sugar into acid and cause cavities.

Floss daily and/or when necessary. That delicious sweet skin of a Honey baked ham can certainly feed a few million bacteria while it is stuck between your teeth. Remove it as soon as possible.

Take care of yourself. Mix in a salad and some roughage. Raw celery and nuts have been shown to help remove plaque from your teeth while chewing. I'm not sure if this works when the celery has been soaked in Bloody Mary, but it's worth a try.

Keep the sweets short. Holiday cookies are fine in short spurts. Enjoy and then rinse with water or brush. Cider and hot cocoa do little damage if their time soaking your teeth in sugar is minimized. Sipping on sweet tea or licking a candy cane all day long should be avoided.

Have a merry holiday season. Until next week, keep smiling.

-Please send greetings to Drs. Parrish through their website: [www.ParrishDental.com](http://www.ParrishDental.com).