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**Meetings & Events**

2011 SPOOKY ZOO SPECTACULAR  
**October 22, 2011**  
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM  
Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago, IL  
**Volunteer Event**

ARCOLIAN DENTAL ARTS SOCIETY OCTOBER 2011 MEETING  
**October 25, 2011**  
6:30 PM - 10:00 PM  
Casa Italia, 1621 N. 39th Ave., Stone Park  
**Non-CDS Event**

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## News

October 25, 2011

### Can Vampires Get Cavities?

#### IN HONOR OF HALLOWEEN, CHICAGO DENTAL SOCIETY EXAMINES MONSTERS' ORAL HEALTH

Keri Kramer



From *Twilight* to *True Blood* and even *Harry Potter*, vampires are everywhere these days. One place they're not, however, is the dentist's chair, according to the Chicago Dental Society, which is celebrating Halloween this year by asking Chicagoland dentists to unseal the dental records of their most frightening patients.

Although they've been known to chip their teeth on stubborn victims—and even lose the occasional fang—vampires are largely immune to cavities, says the society.

As a CDS spokesperson, pediatric dentist Dr. Mary Hayes stuck her neck out, so to speak, to answer the pointed question: Can vampires get cavities?

"Vampires don't get cavities because their favorite meal — blood — is not full of sugar," Hayes said. "And sugar is the main culprit in cavities."

The mouth is home to millions of microscopic bacteria that live on the teeth, gums, lips and tongue. Some of these bacteria attach themselves to tooth enamel in a white film called "plaque," where they grow into large colonies.

Because bacteria use it as a food source, sugar makes the bacteria more active and the plaque thicker, making it harder for the body's natural decay defense—saliva—to keep teeth clean.

Stubborn plaque allows bacteria to feed on sugar in the foods we eat, producing acid as a byproduct. This acid dissolves the minerals that make tooth enamel hard, making the surface of teeth full of tiny holes. Over time, these tiny holes in the tooth enamel grow until one large hole is formed. This is a cavity.

"There is sugar in the blood, but under most circumstances the quantity is very small," Dr. Hayes explained. "There isn't enough of it available to cause decay. The bacteria in the mouth like sugar to be the main part of the diet, and sugar is incidental in the composition of blood."

While drinking blood typically won't cause cavities, it could have cosmetic side effects. Blood contains iron, and people who have extra iron in their diet can get a grayish stains on their teeth. While these stains are superficial, they nonetheless can gray out pearly whites.

While humans and vampires may have different oral hygiene issues, there is at least one thing they can agree on: No one likes the smell of garlic on their breath! If you've consumed too much of this pungent vampire-deterrent, the best thing to do is brush your tongue.

About Chicago Dental Society  
Chicago Dental Society is an association of dentists in the metro Chicago area, an advocate for better oral health for all, and organizer of the Midwinter Meeting, one of the nation's best dental conferences and tradeshow. It is the largest local affiliate of the American Dental Association and the Illinois State Dental Society.

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A tradition of working for the dental profession. The Chicago Dental Society was organized in 1864 and incorporated in 1878. The objective of the Chicago Dental Society is to encourage the improvement of the health of the public, to promote the art and science of dentistry and to represent the interest of the members of the profession and the public that it serves.

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