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Health: Why We Love Sweets



Reporting
Stephanie Stahl

PHILADELPHIA (CBS 3) — The sweet treats of Halloween everybody has a favorite. But why are certain candies so popular? Nutritionist Steven Witherly, who's written a book called "Why Humans Like Junk Food," says it's a lot more complicated than taste.

Witherly said, "Humans are visual animals, and the more interesting it looks the better. And you can do that with shapes and colors." He also said smaller shapes. Mini M&M's and Bite Size Snickers are popular. For colors, DOTS are a big winner. And food scientists have found certain ingredients can be irresistible. The flavoring vanilla is in almost all sweets.

"The number one flavor on the planet is vanilla. And vanilla is a universal flavor. And the reason we think vanilla is important is because it's something we all grew up with. And some people said the flavor of breast milk is vanilla," said Witherly.

The texture of candy also matters, like chewy licorice. And Butterfingers are also a big hit for texture.

"As the sugar melts down it really lights up the brain so that quick meltdown is what people crave," said Witherly.

And there are plenty of other melt in your mouth Halloween treats. The last part of the science of candy is sugar and calories. They go right to the pleasure receptors in the brain. So you can't help but crave it.

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