

Four Realistic Ways to Have a Healthier Halloween

Brought to you by Froedtert and Community Memorial Hospital Dietitians

The healthiest part of Halloween is that kids get some physical activity by walking from house to house. The worst part is that most kids collect a month's worth (or more) of sugar in one night – and then overeat sweets for days (or weeks) afterwards. Fortunately, there are several ways to create healthier Halloween celebrations – without getting into a battle over every piece of candy. (You can use these same ideas for other holidays too!!)

1. Offer healthier treats:

The trick is find something that fits your budget, that kids will enjoy – and that parents will know is safe for their children. You can choose non-food items – or foods/drinks with less fat and sugar. Although most kids are probably not overly excited about getting a toothbrush, actual research shows that they are quite happy to get alternative treats, like:

- ✓ Stickers or temporary tattoos
- ✓ Gel pens, pencils, or erasers
 - ✓ Plastic rings or bracelets
 - ✓ Squeeze-foam balls
- ✓ Nickels, dimes or quarters
 - ✓ Sugar-free gum
- ✓ Miniature boxes of raisins
 - ✓ Boxes of fruit juice

2. Set healthier limits for your child:

Although the world may go candy-crazy around you, you decide how much your child participates. Stick to usual healthy mealtime, bedtime, and tooth brushing routines – they are more important than ever. You can also limit the amount of candy your child eats by:

- ✓ Visiting just a few houses – and going home for a bedtime snack of crunchy carrots and cheese.
- ✓ Going out for a short time – and going home to bob for apples or play your favorite game.
- ✓ Using candy only as an after-dinner dessert – or always serving a glass of milk with candy snacks.

3. Plan a healthier celebration in your home:

You can have a ton of fun with an at-home party – where you make sweets a small part of the celebration. Kids of all ages love old-fashioned games: bobbing for apples, pinning the tail on a scarecrow, or pumpkin carving contests. Costume parades with crazy prize categories are always a hit. Put party foods, like popcorn, trail mix, and oatmeal cookies in empty pumpkin shells, and offer lots of fruits and veggies (with orange-colored dips!).

4. Get other families involved in healthier options:

You can spread out the fun (and the workload) by involving others in your neighborhood, school, or club (like Scouts or 4-H). It can be as simple as coordinating who will give out candy or healthier alternatives on your block – or as elaborate as a holiday mini-carnival with active games, silly prizes, and fun food at your local school. Remember, kids always win when parents take the time to plan for healthier options.