

Views from VanDeWalle

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October 21, 2020

Tips for a Healthier Halloween

For many, autumn events like Halloween are a time to wear costumes, go trick-or-treating, go to parties with friends, and eat sweet treats. Celebrations such as Halloween are a chance to not only have fun, but also provide healthy snack options and be physically active with friends and family. Make your Halloween season healthier this year by getting plenty of physical activity to balance food intake and help children choose wisely and eat their treats in moderation. Below are tips to make your Halloween healthier for trick-or-treaters and guests.

Hand out healthier treats.

- Give out healthier treats for trick-or-treaters and party guests this year. The calories in all those bite-size treats can add up quickly. There are lots of options when it comes to healthier food treats.
- Examples include cereal bars, packages of dried fruit, baked pretzels, trail mix, animal crackers, mini boxes of raisins, graham crackers, sugar-free gum or hard candy, snack-sized pudding containers, individual applesauce containers or squeeze pouches, sugar-free hot chocolate or apple cider packets, individual juice boxes (100% juice), or fig cookies.

Try out non-food treats.

- If you want to steer away from handing out food this year, children will also enjoy non-food treats, such as things you would put in birthday goodie bags. Some non-food items are suitable for all ages, but small items should be limited to kids over age three.
- Examples include small toys, pocket-sized games, plastic costume jewelry, glow sticks, tiny decks of cards, pencils, pencil toppers, fancy erasers, stickers (including reflective safety stickers), bookmarks, bottles of bubbles, whistles, coloring books, or small packages of crayons.

Promote physical activity.

- Use party games and trick-or-treat time as a way to fit in 60 minutes of physical activity for kids. You can encourage and pump up the enthusiasm for being more active by providing small and inexpensive toys that promote activity.
- Items could include a bouncy ball, jump rope, sidewalk chalk for a game of hopscotch or foursquare, or a beanbag for hacky sack.

Moderation is key.

- Halloween is a great time to discuss and demonstrate the importance of moderation. Keep track of children's candy so they don't go overboard in one sitting. Let them pick out a few treats on Halloween night and then let them have a few pieces each day after that.

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- Show kids treats can fit into a healthy eating plan in small amounts. Combine a treat, such as fun-size candy, with a healthy snack like a piece of fruit. Be sure they eat the fruit first, so they don't fill up on the candy.

Survive sweet treats at work.

- Snack- or fun-size candies are small and easy to eat but eating several throughout the day can add up to extra calories. Keep the wrappers where you can see them, so they don't accidentally pile up.
- If you can't just eat a few treats at work, start bringing healthier alternatives with you. Stock your snack bag or desk drawer with fruit cups, dried fruit, lightly sweetened whole grain cereal, graham crackers, low-fat pudding cups, popcorn, or granola bars.
- Remember that friends or co-workers may also be struggling to stay motivated to make healthy changes. Lean on each other and be there when others need encouragement. This year make an effort to bring healthier treat options to work.

Find recipes and learn more at <https://food.unl.edu>.