

Halloween Guide



A Very Healthy Halloween

It's the struggle many parents face each year at Halloween: how to balance the fun and whimsy of Halloween with healthy eating — not to mention avoiding dentist bills. From parties to trick-or-treating, Halloween seems to be made for candy.

If the idea of a trick-or-treat bag full of candy hanging around your house fills you with dread, consider these ideas to avoid being buried under a mountain of sugar this Halloween.

PARTY TREATS

Writing for the Green Plate Rule, a blog about clean eating, mom of two young girls Victoria offers some ways to get fruits and veggies into the Halloween treat mix. Her ideas include arranging tangerines or carrots on a platter in the shape of a pumpkin, adding varying fruits to make the shapes of the eyes, nose and mouth, with a stem made of broccoli or celery.

If you're throwing a party, peel mandarin oranges and insert a short "stem" made of bell pepper or celery in the center cavity at the top, or keep the mandarins in tact and use food-safe markers to draw jack-o-lantern faces on the peels.

Everydayhealthy.com provides a recipe for dark chocolate-covered apples for a heart-healthy antioxidant boost. Simply insert popsicle sticks into four apples, melt 1 cup of dark chocolate baking discs or chips in a double boiler and give each apple a dip, then dry on parchment or wax paper. Another of author Brianna Steinhilber's recommendation



is replacing the raisins on "bugs on a log" with tiny plastic spiders to entice kids. Of course, be sure kids remove the spiders before enjoying this healthy treat.

Another way to keep party fare healthy is to stand up baby carrots in a small clear plastic cup and use a permanent marker to draw a jack-o-lantern face on the outside of the cup. Alternatively, draw jack-o-

lantern faces on the clear plastic tops of disposable cups of mandarin oranges for a healthy treat with a playful Halloween theme.

TRICK-OR-TREAT ALTERNATIVES

If you just can't bring yourself to hand out gobs of sugary treats on Halloween, consider a healthy alternative that can help spread your enthusiasm

for healthy eating. Straws filled with honey or agave nectar and sealed at each end are a healthier candy alternative, since they offer unrefined sugar that takes the body longer to break down. Raisins, fruit leathers and sugar-free gum also are healthier options. Granola bars can be healthy treats, as well, but be sure to read labels as some granola bars have so much added sugar that they're nothing more

than candy bars in disguise. You also might offer small bottles of water to keep kids hydrated for their treat hunting.

While candy certainly is the holy grail of Halloween treats, there's no reason you can't go another route altogether. Kids also will appreciate small party favor-type toys, such as bouncy balls, kaleidoscopes, stickers, glow sticks and erasers.

Personalize Your Pumpkin

It can be hard to make your jack-o-lantern stand out from the crowd of evil faces. Put a creative, personal touch on your creation to keep the whole family talking about your pumpkin for Halloweens to come.

THEMES

Are you a superhero or sports fan? Show your support with your jack-o-lantern. Line up a row of pumpkins showcasing the logos of your favorite teams or good (or bad) guys. Carve your favorite Star Wars characters or jersey numbers. If you can dream it, you can probably find an online template to help you bring your idea to life.

Be prepared to devote some time to this project, as adding the necessary details could take up the better part of an afternoon.

PERSONALIZATION

Add your initials or family name to your pumpkin to make it truly one of a kind. There are many ways to do this. You can order personalized vinyl stickers or make your own with a vinyl cutting machine. Mix and match your favorite colors and patterns, or go for polka dotted, striped or glittered versions of your name or initials. For a simple yet elegant aesthetic, paint a black script initial on a white pumpkin. For a truly unique look, press upholstery tacks into a pumpkin in the shape of your initials. Apply your design to a reusable foam pumpkin for a piece of decor that you can use every year.

ARTISTIC FLAIR

There's no limit to the amount of creativity you can put into your pumpkin. This Old House holds an annual pumpkin carving contest, and 2015's winners included an elaborate scene depicting skeletons wreaking havoc on an unfortunate squash, fancy owls decorated with sticks and feathers, a meticulous recreation of BB-8 of Star Wars fame, a deranged bunny and even Donald Trump's hairdo.

You don't have to be an artist to put a little flair into your pumpkin. A few basic craft supplies can go a long way toward making your pumpkin stand out. Create a diamond patterned motif with black and white acrylic paint, disguise a pumpkin as candy corn with a tri-colored paint job or carve seasonal messages such as "boo," "welcome" and "fall" out of small baking pumpkins. Glam up your pumpkin with shiny gold paint or glitter. Turn the pumpkin on its side and use the stem as an elephant's trunk or a witch's nose. Carve several windows and a door to turn your pumpkin into a haunted house, and complete the scene by painting on a creepy tree and ghosts.

If you put your imagination to work, your squash won't soon be forgotten.



Easy Party Games

If you're hosting a house full of little ghosts and goblins, get the party started with some simple games.

You don't have to go all out to make some spooky memories. With a few basic supplies, you can set the stage for a great time, not just for the kids, but for the adults too.

MARSHMALLOW TOSS

Set up small paper cups in a pattern on a card table. Write a point value on each cup, with lower point values in front and higher point values toward the back. Use a rolled-up piece of tape to keep the cups in place on the tabletop. Let children take turns taking aim at the cups with five marshmallows each. Whoever gets the most points wins.

POKE-A-PUMPKIN

Start with a piece of heavy cardboard or wood veneer about 3 feet by 3 feet. Nail or staple plastic party cups (bonus points for finding Halloween-themed orange ones) into the shape of a pumpkin.

Cover the top of each cup with a small square of orange crepe paper that's large enough to be fastened around the rim of the cup with a rubber band. Before adding the rubber band, drop a small candy or prize into some of the cups. Kids take turns choosing a cup, then poking their fingers through the crepe paper in hopes of finding a prize.

TOILET PAPER MUMMY

For this game, organize kids into teams of two or three. Two teams race each other to cover a friend with toilet paper, mummy style. This game can get rowdy in a hurry, so be sure to play in an open area with plenty of space for spinning the "mummy" around as he gets wrapped.

PUMPKIN BALL TOSS

Line up a row of five empty trick-or-treating pumpkins for a game of ball toss. Kids get one chance to sink a ping pong ball or golf practice ball into each pumpkin from behind a line. For younger kids, allow more chances and move the line closer to the pumpkins.

PIN THE TAIL

A quick online search will turn up tons of free printables for games such as pin the tail on the black cat, pin the eye on the monster, pin the spider on the web, and the list goes on and on. This is a great game for preschool and kindergarten-age children.

PRIZES

The prizes for your party games don't have to be big. Use your imagination. Small candies or party favors work great, but you can go the extra mile by offering special prizes such as "Choose a party decoration to take home!" or "You get to lead the costume parade!"

Halloween Spending

From the costumes to the candy to the decor, our spending during Halloween tells the story of how much Americans enjoy the revelry of this fall tradition.

The National Retail Federation surveys Americans each year about how they plan to celebrate Halloween. This year, the NRF estimates that 171 million Americans will celebrate Halloween, spending \$8.4 billion getting into the spooky spirit, the highest projection in the 11-year history of the survey. That's an average of \$82.93 per person.

“Retailers are preparing for the day by offering a wide variety of options in costumes, decorations and candy, while being aggressive with their promotions to capture the most out of this shopping event,” said Matthew Shay, NRF president and CEO.

The spending breaks down to \$3.1 billion on costumes (purchased by 67 percent of Halloween shoppers), \$2.5 billion on candy (94.3 percent), \$2.4 billion on decorations (70 percent) and \$390 million on greeting cards (35.4 percent), according to the NRF.

Seventy-one percent of consumers will hand out candy, 49 percent will decorate their home or yard, 47 percent will wear a costume, 46 percent will carve a pumpkin, 34 percent will throw or

attend a party and 30 percent said they planned to take their children trick-or-treating. Other popular activities include visiting a haunted house (21 percent) and dressing up their pets in costumes (16 percent).

GETTING THE LOOK

While 22 percent of people surveyed said they would shop online for their Halloween supplies, local costume shops and other brick-and-mortar retailers get a sizable portion of the market. Forty-seven percent of consumers will shop at discount stores, and 36 percent said they would shop at specialty Halloween/costume stores, up from 33 percent last year, according to the NRF.

TASTY TREATS

Supermarkets also were popular shopping destinations, with 26 percent saying they'll shop for Halloween items where they shop for food. With \$2.5 million of our Halloween spending going to candy, it's no surprise that we purchase nearly 600 million pounds of candy each Halloween, according to the NRF, including 35 million pounds of candy corn. If that candy corn were to be laid out



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end to end, it would circle the Earth 4.5 million times, according to Visual.ly. It also

may not be a surprise that children consume as many as 7,000 calories on Halloween

— an intake so large it would take 180 miles of trick-or-treating to burn off.

Stay Safe

It's easy to get caught up in the fun and forget that, although most of the scare around Halloween is imaginary, there are still real dangers.

Each year, pedestrians are injured while trick-or-treating. Take some precautions to keep yourself and your family safe this Halloween.

The following tips from the American Association of Pediatricians and the National Safety Council are intended to keep everyone safe during the celebrations.

COSTUMES

- Plan costumes that are bright and reflective. Consider adding reflective tape or striping to costumes and trick-or-treat bags for greater visibility.
- Make sure shoes fit well and that costumes are short enough to prevent tripping, entanglement or contact with flame. All costumes, wigs and accessories should be fire resistant.
- Because masks can limit or block eyesight, consider non-toxic makeup and decorative hats as safer alternatives. Hats should fit properly to prevent them from sliding over eyes.

CARVING PUMPKINS

- Small children should never carve pumpkins. Let them draw a face with markers, then parents can do the cutting.
- Consider using a flashlight or glow stick instead of a candle to light your pumpkin. If you do use a candle, a votive candle is safest.

- Candlelit pumpkins should be placed on a sturdy table, away from curtains and other flammable objects and should never be left unattended.

TRICK-OR-TREATING

- A parent or responsible adult should always accompany young children on their neighborhood rounds. If older children are going alone, plan and review the route. Agree on a specific time when they should return home.
- Trick-or-treaters should stay in a group, remain on well-lit streets and always use the sidewalk.
- Tell your children not to eat any treats until they return home.
- Teach your children to never enter a stranger's home.
- If no sidewalk is available, walk at the far edge of the roadway facing traffic.
- Never cut across yards or use alleys.
- Only cross the street as a group in established crosswalks (as recognized by local custom). Never cross between parked cars, and enter and exit driveways and alleys carefully.
- Don't assume the right of way. Motorists may have trouble seeing trick-or-treaters. Just because one car stops doesn't mean others will.
- Law enforcement authorities should be notified immediately of any suspicious or unlawful activity.



In the Neighborhood

Halloween can be a great time to get out and socialize with your neighbors. There are many ways to enjoy this holiday together, and maybe even start an annual tradition that will create lifelong memories.

You don't have to go all out to enjoy a little Halloween fun in the neighborhood. Keep it simple for a stress-free but fun event.

CONTESTS

One way to bring everyone together is with a contest. In many communities, Halloween is second only to Christmas when it comes to decking out our homes. Choose the home with the best decorated door or yard. Have a trophy made and have it change hands to the winner each year.

Another fun competition is a pumpkin carving contest. Host a carving event, providing folding tables covered with disposable tablecloths for each entrant to carve a unique creation. Select a panel of judges to choose the overall winner. If you're not up to hosting an event, distribute flyers asking those who'd like to participate to put their carved pumpkins on their doorsteps by a certain date, when the judging will occur.

PARADES

Nothing is cuter than a parade of children in full costume marching down the sidewalk. Organize a parade for your neighborhood and offer a prize for the three best costumes.

In a National Retailers



Federation survey, 16 percent of people said they were planning to dress their pets up in Halloween costumes this year, and in 2015 the NRF estimated people would spend \$350 million on pet costumes. While you're organizing a parade, why not involve pets, too? After all, who can resist a dachshund in a hot dog costume?

HAUNTED HOUSE

Turn your garage into a haunted house for the neighborhood children to enjoy while they're making their rounds for treats. Go easy on the spook to accommodate younger children, or consider offering two sides of your haunted house: one for small children and one with a few

more thrills for older kids. Offer special treats for those who brave the haunted house.

TRICK-OR-TREATING BASECAMP

Designate your home as your street's Trick-or-Treating Basecamp. Set up a fire pit in the driveway where neighbors

can warm up during their trick-or-treating. Offer warm apple cider or hot cocoa and quick games for children.

While you're in the festive event planning mood, why not make your Halloween event into a full-fledged fall fair, with apple bobbing, cider making and a "guess how many candy corns" jar?

Dia De Los Muertos

With an aesthetic that celebrates the human skeleton, you might think el Dia de los Muertos is a celebration of death. It is, however, actually a celebration of life.

Dia de los Muertos has evolved over the years from its roots in ancient Aztec traditions, but it is still a major holiday in Mexico that is celebrated each year on Nov. 1-2.

“Some believe that the souls of the departed return to earth to visit with and to provide council or give advice to family and loved ones,” according to the University of New Mexico.

It can be thought of as a holiday similar to Memorial Day in the United States; in Mexico, people celebrate the day by erecting altars on their loved ones’ graves, decorating them with flowers and candles and bringing gifts.

Public celebrations include parades in which people wear wooden skull masks, or calacas, and dance in honor of the dead.

“When children dance with caricatures of death, eat skull sugar molds and learn to respect that life is brief, they learn there is a circle to life and to not fear death and then are free to enjoy and appreciate every moment,” according to UNM.

HISTORY

Dia de los Muertos has been documented as far back as 3,000 years ago. When Spanish Conquistadors arrived in Mexico in the 1500s, the Day of

the Dead celebrations were thought to be morbid and pagan-like. The Spaniards tried to put an end to the traditions, but they survived and came to be celebrated in conjunction with the Catholic faith’s All Souls Day celebrations.

CELEBRATIONS IN THE U.S.

Today, Dia de los Muertos also is celebrated in the southwestern United States. It is more common for loved ones of the deceased to erect altars in their homes rather than at graveyards. Some cities host parades and hold other public celebrations.

FOOD

Food is a large part of Dia de los Muertos celebrations. A familiar sight in Mexico is sugar skulls, brightly colored candy confections shaped like skulls.

An egg-based bread called pan de muerto, or Day of the Dead bread, also is offered to dead loved ones, along with the favorite foods of the deceased and pitchers of water. This is because it is believed that the spirits arrive hungry and thirsty from their journey.

In some parts of Mexico, graveside celebrations also include picnics and revelry that lasts into the night.

