

Halloween Game Plan

One of the best ways to prevent sugar overload and stomachaches on the big night is to plan ahead. Below are many ideas that can be a part of your game plan. Choose what you think are the most important strategies for your family, then write them down (see below).

Fill up first: Despite the rush and excitement of Halloween night, be sure to serve a healthy dinner, including ½ the plate fruits and vegetables, along with lean protein and whole grains. A full stomach helps decrease the temptation to eat candy while trick-or-treating.

The Candy Game Plan:

Before trick-or-treating, talk with your child about the plan for all the candy loot. Setting expectations about how much candy is reasonable to eat on Halloween night and establishing what you will do with “leftovers” is very important for minimizing battles and provides an opportunity to talk about healthy eating habits and moderation. Some Game Plan examples include:

1. Ask your child to wait to eat candy until she gets home. This strategy minimizes distracted eating, encourages your child to focus on the fun of trick-or-treating and allows you to monitor how much is eaten and a good stopping point.
2. Establish a “number of pieces” of candy that will be allowed each day. If you have caregivers other than yourself, it’s important to communicate this game plan with them for consistency and a successful plan. My recommendation is not more than 2-3 pieces per day, depending on the size of the candy. For example, one piece in a lunch bag and 1-2 pieces after dinner for up to a week. Frequently, the novelty has worn off by then, making it easier to remove the remaining candy.
3. Put the candy stash out of reach and out of sight. This works well for younger children as they frequently forget about the candy after a few days if it’s out of sight.

Offer Non-Candy Alternatives:

When the trick-or-treaters ring your doorbell, offer them healthy alternatives to candy. For example, pretzels, popcorn, trail mix, coins, pencils, erasers, temporary tattoos, and stickers are popular options that some children will choose over candy when offered. By having both candy and non-candy options available, it allows kids with food allergies, Celiac Disease and Type 1 Diabetes to choose a favorite that works for them too.

Be a Role Model:

Eat Halloween candy in moderation yourself. To help avoid temptation, buy your candy at the last minute, buy small portions and remove leftovers. Remind yourself and your child to pay attention to the amount of candy eaten and to stop before feeling full or sick.

Halloween is only one day, but the treats can extend into several weeks when unmonitored. If you're child eats healthy most of the time, then eating candy on Halloween night won't be a problem. The key is establishing moderation for the days following the fun filled night.

What's Your Halloween Game Plan?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

