

Have a Hauntingly Healthy Halloween

It's that time of year. The time for ghouls and goblins and things that go bump in the night. It's also time for costumes and candy and children knocking on doors to offer the option of "Trick or Treat!" To keep your little door-to-door goblins safe during this autumn ritual, we offer a few trick-or-treat guidelines.

Trick-or-treating safety

- When possible, limit trick-or-treating to daylight hours
- If trick-or-treating at dusk, give your child a flashlight or glowstick, or have them wear a glow bracelet so cars can see them
- Ideally, children should trick or treat in groups
- Younger children should be accompanied by a responsible adult or older sibling
- Instruct children to stay in familiar neighborhoods, and approach only houses that are lit
- Have them wear a watch, and set a time for them to be home
- If possible, give the child a cell phone so they can contact you in case of an emergency
- If there is no sidewalk, instruct children to walk on the left side of the road facing traffic and wear reflective strips
- Caution children to stay away from animals they don't know
- Tell children to never enter the home of a stranger

Costume safety

- Make sure costumes don't drag on the ground and create a tripping hazard
- Use reflective markings or tape on the garment
- Look for costumes made of flame-retardant material
- Avoid masks that can obstruct vision; it's better to use makeup
- Carry only flexible knives, swords or other props
- Have the child carry identification, including a home phone number

Candy safety

- Instruct children to bring the candy home to be inspected before eating anything
- Dispose of any loosely wrapped or unwrapped items, and those that have any suspicious looking markings or punctures
- Keep items such as candy corn, caramels, peanuts and small hard candies out of the hands of children 3 years old and younger, as these present possible choking hazards

Good choices for treat bags

If you're the parent who stays home to answer the door all day, consider offering healthy food alternatives for trick-or-treaters, such as packages of low-fat crackers with cheese or peanut butter filling, single-serve boxes of cereal, packaged fruit rolls, mini boxes of raisins and single-serve packets of microwavable low-fat popcorn.

In addition, non-food treats can be just as much fun; children enjoy receiving items such as plastic rings, pencils, stickers, and erasers.

Home celebrations

Or, consider offering an alternative to trick-or-treating – throw a Halloween house party! By providing the children with a place to go to snack, listen to music, and play games, they won't even miss roaming the neighborhood in search of sweets.

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