

## SWEET OR SPOOKY: Halloween candy control



Despite all your work to help your kids eat healthy, holidays like Halloween can quickly throw your efforts off track. Candy in the stores and at school, and, of course, while trick-or-treating means your kids have plenty of access to junk food. It might be downright scary.

While a little candy isn't harmful, it can be easy to overdo it when junk food seems to be everywhere. And the health problems associated with sugary snacks and unhealthy foods are real:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says 1 in 5 school-aged children has obesity. While candy alone isn't to blame, experts know that eating too many foods high in calories and low in nutrition (such as candy and sugary treats) are part of the problem.
- Sugary treats can cause cavities. The American Dental Association says some of the worst offenders are sticky treats that cling to teeth and those that sit in the mouth for a long time like hard candies and suckers. But, any high-sugar snack can spell trouble for someone's dental health.

*The good news is, even health-conscious families can enjoy the fun of Halloween (and a few treats) if they have a plan in place before the spooky day arrives:*



**Don't leave candy out where it can be grabbed any time.** Kids (and adults) tend to reach for whatever is available, and may mindlessly eat whatever is sitting out. Put candy and other goodies in a hard-to-reach cupboard instead. This requires more effort to get to it, so it is "out of sight, out of mind."



**Teach kids moderation.** If you make candy and sweets off-limits, kids may want the forbidden food even more. Instead, allow them a small treat after they've eaten a healthy dinner.



**Lead by example.** If you have a hard time avoiding sweet treats, now is a great time to make healthy eating a family effort. Reserve your candy and other treats for after dinner. Make it a small amount, such as one fun-sized candy bar.



**Buy what you don't like.** If you like to grab a piece here and there while the trick-or-treaters visit your house, buy candy you won't be tempted to eat.



**Donate your candy!** Teach kids to do good by giving their candy to soldiers and charitable causes, such as for kids who are in the hospital. A variety of organizations accept candy, but check first. Try your local food bank, Operation Gratitude, the Halloween Candy Buy Back and Ronald McDonald House.

