

Halloween fun for kids – without sugar buzz

By Callie Miller

There is nothing more exciting for children than dressing up in a cool costume and eating a bunch of tasty treats. It's easy to get overwhelmed with the thought of so much sugar, but you can help your kids enjoy Halloween without eating too many sweets.

First, eat before trick-or-treating. It's not a matter of denying your kids (or yourself) yummy goodies. It's about balance. Start your evening off with a tasty meal full of fiber and protein. This helps fill little bellies with nourishment for a long evening of walking and running. A balanced meal includes protein, fiber-rich carbohydrates and veggies or fruit.

Plan snacks to stay energized. Pair fruits, veggies or grains with protein or fat to create energy-sustaining snacks for Halloween parties without the sugar buzz. Try these spooky ideas:

- **Jack-o-lantern Mini Pizzas:** You will need whole grain English muffins, shredded cheese (cheddar for orange color), red bell peppers, pepperoni and other toppings you desire. Cut red bell peppers or pepperoni into jack-o-lantern face shapes. Have your kids decorate their own mini pizzas. Bake in the oven at 350 degrees for about 5-8 minutes, until pizzas are bubbling.
- **Stuffed Pepper Pumpkins:** Cut orange and red bell peppers into scary faces and make a top like you would when carving a pumpkin. Add precooked chili, mac and cheese or taco meat inside the pepper. Roast in the oven at 425 degrees for 5 to 10 minutes so peppers are soft, and the contents are warmed.
- **Boo-Na-Nas:** Using regular-sized and mini chocolate chips, make fun ghost faces on bananas. Dip bananas in peanut butter or Nutella for an extra flavor boost. Cut banana in half and stand each half upright on a small plate for an edible Boo-Na-Na decoration.
- **Cutie Jack-o-lanterns:** Peel cutie oranges. Cut small pieces of celery and add as the "stem" for the clementine.
- **Cheese Monster Faces:** Using Babybel cheese, gently cut monster faces just on the red shell, not the cheese. Add googly eyes or draw funny faces to make some fun Halloween-themed cheese faces.

Get the kids moving with holiday games, such as:

- **Zombie Tag:** Choose 1-2 people to be the "zombies". If you get tagged by a zombie, you are now a zombie, too! Play until everyone is turned into a zombie. This is a great game for a larger group of kids.
- **Pumpkin Patch Circuit:** Grab your pumpkins and set up a fun obstacle course in the backyard. Have each kid take a turn and jump in yourself for a fun workout.

- **Freeze Dance:** Play some kid-friendly Halloween music on YouTube or Spotify. Have your kids dance away. Then randomly stop the music so they can “freeze”. Dance with them and enjoy the music.

Give yourself and your kids permission to enjoy Halloween. Keep their bodies moving and fueled with healthy food, so they are less likely to eat candy all day long.

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