Tips for moderating sugar consumption during Halloween

By Kelsey Schlidt

Halloween is a fun night for kids to dress up and have a good time with family and friends, and it is also time for candy. Candy is a tasty treat, but trying to limit sugar intake can be stressful for parents.

Too much sugar can lead to higher childhood weight and risks of health problems like type 2 diabetes and cavities. Some sugar is okay, but we don't want to have too much. One night of candy won't cause this, but we want to build healthy habits. Here are some tips to help your child have a sweet treat without going overboard on sugar.

Make Halloween about the whole event, not just the candy. You can't deny that candy is a part of Halloween but try focusing on the evening as a whole. One idea is to make a big deal about the time before trick-or-treating. There are so many activities kids can do that aren't focused on candy. You can try carving pumpkins, getting into costumes with friends, or making a spooky-themed snack or meal. This will help them get excited about other parts of the day, not just how much candy they can get.

Before trick-or-treating, have your child eat a well-balanced dinner. This can help control those sugar cravings. If a kid goes into the night hungry, they are more likely to want more candy. You can try a cold-weather favorite like grilled cheese and tomato soup, or cheese, crackers, and veggies as a snack. Serve a vegetable or fruit, a whole grain, and a protein source. This will help keep the kids full and have plenty of energy for the long night of trick-or-treating.

Help other parents out by offering treats other than candy at your door. You can try non-food items like bouncy balls, temporary tattoos, stickers or healthier snacks like clementines or bags of popcorn. These options can also help kids who have allergies or sensory sensitivities.

Don't make candy a bad thing, because strict rules can backfire. Many registered dietitians agree that restricting candy can cause more harm than good. Taking away kids' options can make them want the candy even more. Try letting your child keep track of their own candy for a week but make some rules. For example, if they want to eat candy, they have to brush their teeth every time. Chances are, they will get tired of brushing their teeth and lose interest in the candy. The less power you give candy, the less interested your kids should be.

Still want that candy bounty out of the house? Try offering a trade. Is there a book or toy they have been wanting? Trade the candy stash for that.

Don't stress too much, Halloween is just a small part of the year. If you can focus on building healthy eating habits the rest of the year, you will be able to sit back and enjoy the holiday with your kids.

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