

Halloween – Safe and Sweet Solutions

My kids have been talking about Halloween since the beginning of school and their excitement about the upcoming event is only getting more intense as each day gets us closer to October 31st. I want them to have fun, be safe, and enjoy the sweet treats the same as any parent. However, I know how important it is to moderate their excitement and their consumption! Please join me in helping this be a good experience for all the children in our communities. Here are some things we can talk with our children about before Halloween gets here and on that night, as well, to make it great for everyone.

Having Fun and Being Safe:

Before Halloween arrives, arrange for your children to walk with another neighborhood family as a way to “buddy up” while out trick-or-treating. There is safety in numbers. Children, along with a responsible adult, should try to stay in groups of 3 - 5. In advance of the evening, determine the area of your community that they are permitted to go. It would be wise to drive or walk through the area that they will be trick-or-treating. Remind them to cross at the corner of the blocks and not to cut across in the middle of streets. Wear reflective clothing or tape on the costume. Since many costumes are made from dark fabrics, it's harder for drivers to see the dressed-up children crossing the street. Some shoes have reflective materials on them. Although this will help, it is wise to make sure there is reflective tape or material visible from both the back and the front on the main parts of the costume. Parents should follow the same suggestions and consider equipping themselves and their children with flashlights,

as well. Talk to your children about appropriate behavior while out for the evening. They are so excited that sometimes they forget to say a simple "thank you." My three boys think it's a race to the door to knock or ring the doorbell, which has led to some mild brotherly skirmishes at the door. Last year, I told them to take turns so that they knew who needed to arrive at the door first. It seemed like a great idea, and it did work.. but I had to remind them multiple times! Sometimes residents offer multiple pieces of candy, which is very generous of them, but I encourage my kids to accept only a single piece. Again, it is an important lesson in moderation. I don't want them to think Halloween is a free-for-all and showing them how to moderate their collection of candy helps reinforce this idea. They will undoubtedly have more candy than they need as it is! Another guideline I share with my children deals with which doors to approach. If there is a light on by the door or on the front porch, I tell them that it is okay to trick-or-treat at that house. If there is no light on outside of the house, they need to walk past that house, even if they see lights on inside. Not everyone wants children knocking on their door for Halloween and I explain the importance of respecting that.

Sweet Solutions:

When we get home from being out on Halloween, I sit down at the table with my children to help them "sort" their candy. The first thing we do is throw away any unwrapped or open candy. I always explain that germs and dirt can get on the candy and may make them sick. I would love to tell you that they readily comply with this request and understand the value of food safety, but, they are kids! Sometimes I just

have to be the “no-fun” mom and tell them to throw it away, no matter how much they like the only partially wrapped “eye-ball” jaw breaker or “skeleton” fruit chew.

The amount of candy that usually makes it back to our house is a bit overwhelming!

For that reason, I ask them to pick out their favorite treats to set aside for rationing out over the next several weeks. We then collectively put the remains together to share with other people such as relatives or friends.

Finally, there are some things each of us can do to make Halloween fun, safe and healthy. Be cautious about handing out hard candies to younger children because they can cause the child to choke on the candy, especially for those under the age of 3.

Perhaps instead of handing out candy, you could hand out healthier options such as packets of raisins, pretzels, or peanuts. You could choose to hand out non-edible treats to reduce the sugar load for kids. Items such as reflective stickers, Halloween pencils, or erasers are good alternatives. They will last a lot longer, too!

We can all work together to make Halloween to make it a fun, safe and sweet evening in our communities. Until next week, keep living resourcefully!