

Food 'tricks' that combat sneaky, creepy Halloween treats

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The sneakiest, creepiest surprise this Halloween may actually be in the candy dish. In a study being presented this Saturday at the American Heart Association conference in Orlando shows that people ate only half as many mini-size Halloween candies when they kept the wrappers in plain sight. The sneakiest, creepiest surprise this Halloween may actually be in the candy dish.

In a study being presented this Saturday at the American Heart Association conference in Orlando shows that people ate almost half as many mini-size Halloween candies when they kept the wrappers in plain sight, according to lead author, Brian Wansink, author of "Mindless Eating." Having a visual reminder of how much they ate, keeps you honest and eating less," said Wansink, "Your stomach can't count, but your eyes can when they see the empty wrappers.

Mindless Eating offers additional strategies you can employ this Halloween to reengineer your environment and help you and your kids mindlessly eat better:

- 1) Out of sight, out of mind.

If you keep a candy dish with a whole potpourri of Halloween candy on your desk at work, rather than just dumping it, move it away 5, 10 feet. In studies we've done with secretaries with dishes of chocolate candy on their desk, we found that by simply moving the candy dishes farther away, the secretaries ate considerably less.

It takes more work to get up and walk to the opposite side of the room to grab a Hershey's kiss than when it's sitting right next to your stack of papers that needs to be faxed. Similarly, when your kids come home after hours of trick-or-treating, don't just empty out their pillow cases onto a serving bowl in the middle of the dining room table and let everyone have at it whenever they want. You'll quickly find your kids spending as much time at the dining room table as they do in front of the TV.

2) Don't give up your job as nutritional gatekeeper.

Control the amount your family eats — let your kids enjoy the fruits (would that it were literal) of their labor a little bit, and then take away the stash. Divvy it out over a period of time — perhaps allow a couple pieces after they've eaten their dinner, set a limit of x number of pieces a day, etc. etc. How you go about it is up to you, but remember your job as the nutritional gatekeeper. After all, without you monitoring your family's consumption, Halloween will not only come once a year, it will last just one day.

3) Redesign your daily eating habits to accommodate the extra calories that Halloween brings on.

Let's face it — if kids can go out and get a bag full of free candy, chances are it's not going to go to waste. But don't let it be tacked in addition to other unhealthy eating habits. For instance, if your kids have a "goody" every night after dinner, let the Halloween candy be the "goody" that takes the place of the ice cream, brownies, or whatever they normally might have.

The same goes for you — if you're eating out November 2 and can't decide whether you want dessert, remember that you probably have a considerable amount of Halloween candy left over at home. If you were

to order dessert, you'd still be likely to, when you got home, sneak in a Twizzlers or Snickers bar. These are just some ideas and strategies, which, depending on your self-control, you may or may not need. Above all, come this Halloween just remember the ancient Greeks and their famous aphorisms — “know thyself” and “nothing in excess” — and you should be fine.

Source: Cornell Food & Brand Lab

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