

Scary part of Halloween is sugar, calories in trick-or-treat bag

October 22 2014, by Evie Polsley



The real horror in a kid's Halloween trick-or-treat bag is how it adds to an already-scary epidemic of childhood obesity.

For most kids Halloween is all about the candy. It is estimated that each child's bag of goodies contains about 4,800 calories, has 3 cups of sugar and 1½ cups of fat. The real horror in the Halloween trick-or-treat bag is how it adds to an already-scary epidemic of childhood obesity.

"Kids and teens love Halloween. It's filled with fun parties, costumes and free candy. Halloween can be a great time as long as parents make sure their child doesn't go overboard eating all that candy," said Garry Sigman, MD, director of the Pediatric Weight Management Program at

Loyola University Health System in Maywood, Ill.

Sigman gives some tips for making Halloween happy and healthy:

Focus on fun, not candy. Find fun activities for your kids to do instead of just walking door-to-door getting candy. Plan a party with fun games or have a pumpkin-carving contest. You could watch a scary movie or have a costume parade.

Set limits. Limit the time your kids are out trick-or-treating. Instead of the pillowcase, look for a small bag that they can use to collect candy. When they get home, let them pick out two pieces to eat and then put the rest away in a freezer or hidden place to save for another day. Children should eat no more than one or two pieces of candy a day. If children are obese, they should not eat more than one or two pieces of candy a week.

Host a candy trade-in party. When the [kids](#) get back from trick-or-treating, the candy in each child's bag is weighed. Kids can exchange their candy for prizes based on the bag's weight.

Not all treats are unhealthy and you can help your neighbors by handing out healthier treats. According to Sigman, healthier treats include:

- Fruit leathers
- Packs of sugarless gum
- Boxed or packaged dried fruit, like raisins
- Single servings of ready-to-eat cereal, but look for ones with less than 10 grams of sugar
- Lollipops
- Jolly Ranchers
- 100-calorie packs of cookies or snacks
- Low-fat granola bars
- Snack-size bags of popcorn

- Treats such as Play-Doh, spider rings, bubbles, temporary tattoos, sidewalk chalk or cookie cutters.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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