



TIP SHEET

Have a Fun and Safe Halloween

Between the scary masks and costumes to the spooky noises and loads of candy that comes with Halloween it's easy to get wrapped up in the excitement. However, Halloween can also be overwhelming for children, especially children with special needs such as autism. Here are a few tips to help make your Halloween less frightening and more fun!

Pumpkin Carving - For a child with olfactory (smell) and/or tactile (touch) sensitivities, carving pumpkins may not be an enjoyable activity. Fun options include painting or decorating a pumpkin with beads. Browse your local craft store for other fun ideas.

For Non-Sweet Eaters - A visit from "The Great Pumpkin" is a fun activity for a child with diabetes or who does not like candy/sweets. Use your imagination and tell a story about the "The Great Pumpkin" and how this pumpkin really likes candy and other sweet treats. After trick or treating, have your child put all of the candy in a bag or basket and leave out for the Great Pumpkin. In the morning, your child will discover that the Great Pumpkin has come for the candy and left a special surprise, such as a book or small toy.

Selecting a Costume – Help your child choose a costume that fits properly and is safe. If your child does not tolerate a mask because of sensory issues, he could hold it or select a costume that does not require a mask. If your child is sensitive to sound, select a costume that would facilitate the use of headphones such as a construction worker. Allow your child to wear her costume before the holiday to get used to it.

Practice Going to People's Doors – Role play going to someone's door, saying "Trick or treat," holding out the treat container, and saying "Thank you." You can also practice having your child take only *one* piece of candy and waiting her turn.

Create Guidelines in Advance

Prepare your child for unknown factors about Halloween, such as:

- The time that trick or treating will end.
- How she will know when it ends.
- Where she will trick or treat (e.g. only houses with outdoor lights on, neighbors and other familiar people).
- The importance of staying with a parent or sibling while trick or treating.

Review these guidelines in advance using a story, visual cards, or written rules.

Make a Candy Plan – If your child gets excited about getting Halloween treats, create a plan *in advance* about eating the candy. Let him know *before* trick or treating that he needs to bring his candy home to make sure it is safe before he eats any. Make sure he eats dinner before trick or treating. Have guidelines about the number of pieces he can eat per day. Create a schedule for eating candy. Display the candy schedule where he can easily look if he has questions.

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