



## Trick or Treat: Terrific Techniques

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- **Discuss your expectations in advance.** Discuss rules and expectations a few days before Halloween when both parent and child can calmly review them. Many families agree on rules such as collect as much candy as you want and choose one big piece or two small pieces to eat tonight; or visit just these ten neighborhood houses. This is also a great opportunity to teach your child social skills such as “please” and “thank you”, and have your child practice beforehand.

- **Decide on post-Halloween candy rules in advance.** Some families have had success with planning out a one-candy-per-day rule for the week after Halloween. Other families have had success allowing the child to exchange all of their collected candy for a highly desired toy (also known as the “Great Pumpkin” exchange). Or, if you are visiting just a few homes in your neighborhood, you may decide to give each house a pre-prepared healthier treat or toy.

- **Plan your child’s costume and candy collection bag.** Avoid costumes with lots of pockets or sweatpants with elastic at the bottom of the legs because both offer easy opportunity to smuggle candy under the guise of “keeping their hands warm” or “tying their shoe”. Having glow-in-the-dark bracelets on both of your child’s wrists is not only good for safety, but also increases visibility of their hands to prevent palming candy without your knowledge. Candy bags can be modified to have Velcro-secured openings so you can hear when it is opened.

- **Teach your child what to expect.** Advise them how to react to “tricks” like motion-activated spiders or people who are dressed in costume who jump out at trick-or-treaters. Let your child know that this is all part of the fun and talk through what behavior is acceptable in response to being spooked.

- **Prepare your child to transition out of trick-or-treating.** Some people with PWS are reluctant to give up trick-or-treating in their late teens, but this transition is made easier when they are primed in advance. For example, “next year when you’re 17 and too old to go trick-or-treating door to door, you can dress up in a costume and help me hand out the candy!” Just because they are no longer going trick-or-treating doesn’t mean they have to miss out on all the fun!

- **What about managing the trick-or-treaters at my door?** Your family may decide that having candy in the house is simply not an option. If that’s the case, you may consider low calorie pretzel bags; stores now offer a greater variety of low calorie and low sugar snacks that are a great alternative. If you’re interested in offering a non-food options, look for things like glow sticks, stickers, pencils, bubbles, or novelty toys like vampire fangs. Some families who have a child with special dietary needs have joined the national Teal Pumpkin Project™, launched by the Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE). For more information check out their website [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org).



- **What if it's all just too stressful?** If you believe it will be too stressful to stay at home on Halloween night while the doorbell rings incessantly, you may consider taking the family out to a movie, or bowling, or to an arcade, or miniature golfing. These can be fun activities and maybe the start of a new tradition!



You may have noticed one thing that each of these tips has in common: *advanced preparation*. Utilize the *Paint the Picture* intervention: with a little applied foresight, many of the challenges associated with this candy-filled holiday can be lessened or even avoided entirely. And *that* is what *really* makes it a Happy Halloween!

