



## Use Halloween to coach moderation

**My 6-year-old daughter is excited about trick-or-treating this year, but I'm concerned about how to limit the candy she eats afterward. What's the best way to handle Halloween?**

Actually, Halloween can be a perfect time to focus on balance and moderation in the diet. Figuring out how to fit sweet treats into a healthy eating pattern is a good lesson to learn early in life.

So, how do you do that? It can be tricky. Too much restriction could tempt your child to snitch the forbidden treats. At the same time, keeping the Halloween haul within arm's reach could lead to mindless munching and overindulging.

Nutrition experts suggest talking with your child in advance about how much candy is a reasonable amount at any given time — normally one or two snack-size treats. Talk about when she would like to indulge — with lunch at school, as an after-school snack or after dinner at home?

Don't try to hide the candy from your child — you want to help her learn self-regulation in her eating habits, and that won't happen if you take complete control. Rather, store it in a place that's out of eyesight and is less convenient than healthier snacks. Research from the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab found that the visibility and convenience of a food consistently increases its consumption. So consider keeping the candy in a covered container

in the pantry. As she gets older, encourage your daughter to choose a location for herself.

Try to keep a bowl of apples, bananas or other fruit where they're easily seen and can be grabbed for a snack. The fruit will help your daughter fill up on healthy snacks and crave fewer sweets, while at the same time learn how to incorporate treats into everyday healthy eating.

Some parents "buy out" a portion of the collected candy. This allows children to keep their favorite sweets and earn money from, rather than consuming, the rest.

You also might consider passing out both candy and other items for trick-or-treating. In a 2006 Yale University experiment, nearly half of 284 trick-or-treaters ages 3 to 14 chose a toy — stretch pumpkin men, glow-in-the-dark insects, Halloween stickers or pencils — over candy when given the option. This will help show your daughter that candy isn't the only kind of Halloween treat.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember is to be a good role model. If you binge on your child's stash after she goes to bed at night, she's going to notice. Instead, enjoy a treat with your daughter, and then put the container away for another day.

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1043, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*



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**Oct. 17, 2014**

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**Editor:**

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