



## Trick or Treat: Terrific Techniques

By Katherine Crawford  
Edits by Emily Dame, M.Ed.  
Education & Training Coordinator 10/2015

**-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; visit just these ten neighborhood houses. This is also a great opportunity to teach your child “please” and “thank you” and have the child put it into practice.

**-Decide on post-Halloween candy rules beforehand.** Some families have had success by planning out a one-candy-per-day rule for the week after Halloween. Other families have had success by allowing the child to exchange all the candy collected for a highly desired toy (also known as the “Great Pumpkin” exchange). If you are visiting just a few homes in your neighborhood, you may decide to give each house a pre-prepared Halloween bag to give your child including little toys and possibly a healthy treat.

**- 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. Both offer easy opportunities for the child 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 are to prevent them from 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 it 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 get to dress up 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 the trick-or-treaters at my door?** Your family may have decided that sugary candy is not an option for your child with PWS. Or, seeing a whole bowl full of candy that’s off limits may increase your child’s anxiety. For these families and older kids and adults who like to hand out goodies to the trick-or-treaters, there are other options such as low calorie and non-food treats. Stores are now offering a greater variety of low calorie and low sugar snacks that are a great alternative to the high sugar candies that may be floating around the neighborhood.

If you are interested in offering a non-food option at your door, look for things like glow sticks, stickers, pencils, bubbles, or novelty toys like vampire fangs. Many families who have children with special dietary needs are joining in a national campaign launched by Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE). The Teal Pumpkin Project™ raises awareness of food allergies and promotes inclusion of all trick-or-treaters throughout the Halloween season. For more information check out their website: <http://www.foodallergy.org/teal-pumpkin-project>



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



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