

Halloween treats don't have to be nutritionally tricky

With Halloween right around the corner, it's the perfect time to think about changing up the normal routine this year.

For kids, Halloween often ranks just below Christmas in terms of favorite holidays. After all, it's a time for donning a new costume and seeing who can amass the most candy and consequently a several-days-long sugar-high. The seemingly inevitable sugar monsters your kids turn into can be avoided with a few easy steps, while still keeping them happy.

According to Lori Mooney, a registered and licensed dietitian at the Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition at Nationwide Children's Hospital, "the most important thing a parent can do on Trick-or-Treat night is feed their kids a nutritious dinner. This prevents over-indulging on the candy once they get back home." Another way to prevent candy overload is to limit the availability after Halloween is over. "Parents don't need to completely take away the candy," said Mooney. "They just need to ration it to a couple of pieces a day." Portioning candy with other healthy alternatives such as fruits, vegetables, crackers, low fat milk and granola bars also is advised, she said.

When it comes to deciding what to hand out to the neighborhood kids this year, instead of buying that jumbo bag of assorted candy, consider some other options. Mooney said, "rather than letting each child grab a handful of candy, try handing out only one snack-size piece of



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candy along with a healthier option as well." Suggestions for healthier options to pair with traditional candy include:

- granola bars
- sugar-free gum
- trail mix
- snack-size boxes of raisins
- popcorn
- 100 percent juice fruit snacks

It's best to use your judgment about your child's personality and eating habits. If your child tends to overdo the sugar, set limits and place the candy in a setting where you have more control. Never allow children to

keep candy in their bedroom. Even for the most well-behaved kids, having candy in such close proximity can be irresistible.

Remember to be a role model for your kids. Asking your kids to eat only one or two pieces a day while binging on it yourself sends the wrong message. Finally, remember that although a little overindulgence is sure to happen on Halloween, it won't have a lasting impact as long as your family eats sensibly the rest of the year.