

— by Cassi Denari



Halloween is a time of fun and freedom for your children. Running around the neighborhood, in the dark, dressed up, all while eating candy non-stop. And they even have their parents' permission! For most kids, it's a dream come true. But for some, it can be down-right frightening. It's not the ghosts, goblins, and witches that are scary. It's the nuts! Here are some suggestions to help make Halloween a little less terrifying;

Arm Your Child With Knowledge

Teach your child to be their own advocate. Asking if the candy has nuts isn't necessarily enough. For their own safety, your child must know for sure. If there is any uncertainty — do not eat it. Know your candy. (From personal experience, stay away from the generic unmarked foil candy.)

Be Prepared

Bring emergency medications (epinephrine auto injector and an antihistamine) in case of exposure or a reaction. If you're with a group, let the others know of the allergy and what to look out for if your child has a reaction.

Give Final Approval

If your child must sample the candy while out and about, have them check with you before eating anything.

When we go tricking-or-treating, my son will pick out a piece of candy, hand it to me and I will approve it (or not) and that way I can be sure he is eating candy that is safe.

Tara T., a mother of two, whose son has a nut allergy says, "After trick-or-

-treating I go through the entire bag. As a family we get rid of all peanut items and cross-contaminated candy. If possible, we avoid getting peanut and nut items from the neighborhood. Some neighbors know of his allergy and buy only what he can have."

Look for the Teal Pumpkin

The Teal Pumpkin Project is a nationwide movement that promotes inclusion for children with allergies. Houses with the teal pumpkin out front have allergy-friendly treats — toys and candy with no nuts! The teal pumpkins offer a safe alternative.

Learn more about the Teal Pumpkin Project® here: <https://www.foodallergy.org/education-awareness/teal-pumpkin-project>



Other Options

1) Enjoy trick-or-treating. When you get home sort the candy and give them only what is safe. Or trade the candy for a toy or present. Jessica S., mother of two, whose oldest son has a nut allergy says, "When Kieran was younger, it worked best for us to let him trick-or-treat and then trade his stash for a toy and one safe treat."

2) BYOC — Bring Your Own Candy to snack on while you're trick-or-treating. That way you are 100% sure your child is safe. Jenna P., mother of three, whose youngest son has a nut allergy says, "Dez trick-or-treats like all the kids and doesn't touch his bag as he's enjoying the fun. I carry a stash of safe candy and share with him at the start and when he wants to eat. Once we're home we divide his and his siblings candy into two piles — safe and not safe. In the past we've donated the not safe and kept the rest. However, now my eldest, 15, takes it with him to school and shares with his friends."

3) Donate your candy to Operation Gratitude which includes candy in every care package they send to deployed troops, first responders, veterans, and others. Visit <https://www.operationgratitude.com/express-your-thanks/halloween-candy/> to learn more.

4) Check with your child's dentist to see if they have a Halloween candy "buy back" program.

5) Instead of trick-or-treating have a party and control the available candy.

With new research, medical advancements and desensitization, the future holds hope that someday Halloween and nuts won't be so scary. In the meantime, make sure your children are aware of what they're eating. With the right education, you can let them be free, feel included, and enjoy Halloween.

.....
Cassi Denari is the mother of two sweet boys. One son has a nut allergy. In her spare time she writes children's stories.