

Q. I don't like giving out unhealthy candy or things that kids don't like for Halloween. What healthy Halloween treats would you suggest?

A. Whether we like it or not, kids want candy for Halloween. Amazingly, trick-or-treaters in the United States carry away about 598 million pounds of candy every October 31st.

It does take some creativity. In the past, some health-minded people handed out fresh oranges or apples, but they aren't popular with everyone. Other people used to bake their own goodies. But most parents don't trust homemade items now for their kids. Fortunately, there are other healthy treats you could try:

1. Dark chocolate, used to make candy bars and chocolate-covered raisins, contains less sugar than traditional chocolates. It's high in antioxidants that are protective to the heart and brain. Chocolate-covered nuts and raisins are the healthiest. Dark chocolate also naturally causes the brain to release chemicals that can improve a person's mood. (But be careful to not overdo it. Chocolate is high in saturated fats and calories.)



2. Fruit leather retains most of the nutritional value found in fresh fruits. Look for the no-sugar-added label at the store.

3. Candy-coated walnuts and almonds may also satisfy the sweet tooth of your trick-or-treaters.

You might also consider handing out inexpensive toys such as miniature cars, yo-yos, puzzles, and whistles as a candy-alternative. Many dentists hand out tooth brushes to those who want them. With a little thought and planning, you can give out healthy treats kids will still enjoy.

When Halloween night is over and your kids bring home their candy, don't let them eat it all in the first couple of days. Put it away. Then offer a few pieces after dinner each evening. A little candy followed by teeth brushing before bed is not a health concern. Eating candy all day long is a health concern. You could also make a trade with your kids. For example, in exchange for the unhealthy candy they brought home, offer homemade treats that you know are good for them.

