

Tips for a Safe and Comfortable Halloween

Your child needs to know what to expect. Start talking about Halloween at least two weeks in advance.

Read books together about Halloween.

Write a social story. Personalize it with photos or drawings.

Watch Utube videos about trick-or-treating. (Make sure you preview them first.)

Ask your neighbors to have their kids come for a 'dress rehearsal' day before. Your child can first practice answering the door and handing out candy to kids. Then switch and practice knocking and saying "trick or treat!" Or practice trick-or-treating at your own house or grandma's.

Your child may only want to dress up and walk up and down the street watching the other kids and looking at the decorations. Eventually, he/she may want to knock on doors and yell "trick or treat" like a pro.

Be flexible, no expectations! Your child may be content stopping at only five or six houses.

Be aware of which areas have displays with lots of gore and special effects so you can avoid them.

Discuss with the child safety tips for crossing the street, such as remembering to look both ways before crossing. The child may be over-stimulated from the change in schedule, so priming may be necessary.

Flashlights or glow sticks help. They offer comfort and some control.

If your child is nonverbal, or not very verbal, make sure he or she wears some kind of identifying bracelet or tag – it can even be part of the costume if done cleverly.

Take a route familiar to your child. Avoid homes decorated with flashing lights and loud sounds that may trigger sensory reactions. Review the day's events when winding down. Discuss any fears about something seen or heard. Reassure him of your love and protection.

Plan now for how you will handle candy consumption. A gluten or dairy intolerance may not be an issue with Halloween treats, but food dyes and sugar may be. Decide the candy-eating rules in advance and write them down.

Be sure your child understands that Halloween is one night only.

When your child is too old to trick or treat, or if trick or treating is just too hard, teach them to give out treats. To "sweeten" the deal, each time someone comes to your house let him/her add a piece of candy to a treatbag reserved for him/her.

Choose a costume early and let him/her wear it ahead of time to make sure there are no sensory problems with it.

In lieu of a costume, try a Halloween T-shirt or pajamas.

For teens and young adults who still love Halloween, there may be community events (haunted house or train ride). Check your community for similar events.

If Halloween night is too overwhelming for your child, consider having a daytime party with costumes and activities your child will enjoy.