



Navigating Halloween

A Guide for Parents of Children on the Autism Spectrum

Each year, Halloween brings a magical night of dress-up and yummy treats for kids of all ages. However, for children with autism, the holiday's loud noises, bright decorations, and unfamiliar nighttime activities can be overwhelming. Preparing your child for what Halloween involves can make the night enjoyable for everyone.



1 Prepare your child:

- You can teach your child about Halloween to familiarize your child with the holiday. Focus on what the day is and what happens on it.

2 Managing Decorations & Sounds

- Remind your child that all decorations and sounds are pretend and are just for fun.
- Be cautious of sensory-overloading elements like fog machines and flashing lights.
- Carry a sensory toy, headphones, or ear plugs when visiting places with loud or overwhelming environments.

3 Costume Considerations

- Choose costumes that meet your child's sensory needs.
- Align the costume with your child's interests.
- Test the costume several days in advance to get your child accustomed to it.
- Avoid face paint and other elements that could be sensory-challenging.
- Consider a larger-sized costume so your child can wear their own comfortable clothes underneath.

4 Dealing with Others' Costumes

- Explain that costumes don't change the person underneath.
- Ask friends to momentarily remove masks to reassure your child.
- Allow siblings to wear their costumes around the house to normalize the experience.



5 Trick-or-Treating Tips

- Consider “trunk or treat” and other Halloween event activities as a practice run to the big night.
- Stick close to home to allow for quick breaks, if needed.
- If evening darkness is a concern, go out earlier or take a flashlight.
- For non-speaking or limited communication children, use a badge or sign to indicate their unique communication style. There are some attached to this PDF.

6 Alternatives to Trick-or-Treating

- If your child prefers to stay in, they can help distribute candy or enjoy a quiet evening with a book or movie.
- You can set up trick-or-treat stations around your home for your child to collect candy from.

7 General Health and Safety

- **Capture a Pre-Event Photo:** Take a snapshot of your child in their Halloween costume as a precautionary identification measure.
- **Enhance Nighttime Visibility:** If your child is prone to wandering, equip them with light-up sneakers or glow-stick bracelets to make them easily visible after dark.
- **Be Easily Identifiable:** Wear something that stands out so your child can easily spot you in a crowd.
- **Equip with Identification:** Make sure your child carries some form of ID and a communication method. If your child is nonverbal, place a piece of paper with your contact details in their pocket.
- **Outdoor Treat Station:** If distributing treats, set up an outdoor table with individually wrapped goodies to minimize physical contact and reduce germ spread.
- **Group Size and Social Etiquette:** Trick-or-treat in small groups, maintain respectful distances from others, and wash your hands thoroughly upon returning home.
- **Handing out treats:** If you plan on giving out treats, try to include non-food items for those with allergies and dietary restrictions.



With these tips in hand, you'll be well-prepared to create a Halloween experience that's enjoyable for everyone. Happy Halloween!



TRICK
OR
TREAT



I MAY NOT SPEAK BUT

thank you

FOR THE TREATS!



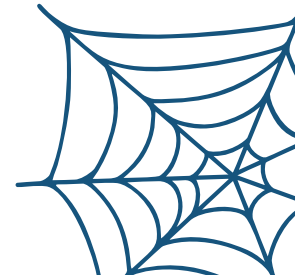


TRICK OR TREAT

HI MY NAME IS _____

I HAVE AUTISM AND IT CAN BE
DIFFICULT TO SAY “TRICK OR
TREAT” BUT I AM TRYING.

Thank you!





TRICK OR TREAT

**HI MY NAME IS
I HAVE A SPEECH IMPAIRMENT AND
IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO SAY “TRICK
OR TREAT” BUT I AM TRYING.**

Thank you!