



Welcome to candyland

"I usually throw out most of my kids' Halloween treats, but my husband thinks we should let them eat as much as they want. Who's right?"

BY ANNA-KAISA WALKER

Sara Dimerman
Child and family therapist,
Thornhill, ON

Don't throw the candy out – your kids will crave it more, and they'll be more likely to gorge if they know it's going to be taken away. When parents and children get into power struggles, it just leads to worse behaviour. Accept that they're going to eat more candy than usual on Halloween (without letting them make themselves sick). After you sort through their treats and take out anything that's not safely packaged, leave the rest in a bowl on the kitchen table. If your kids no longer see it as forbidden fruit, it'll eventually become part of the furniture and they'll just lose interest.

Dr. Liann Meloff
Clinical director of the Pediatric
Weight Clinic, Calgary

Come up with a plan that you agree on with your kids before Halloween – for example, once they get home from trick-or-treating, divide their haul into two halves, one to keep and one to give away to a food bank, shelter or hospital. Let the kids choose one or two small pieces a day from the portion you keep, for a few weeks following the holiday (or until it runs out). For most children, the best part of Halloween is the dressing up and coming back with a big haul that they can show off, not necessarily eat. But the occasional treat won't throw off an overall healthy diet, even for overweight children.

Catherine Connors
Mom of two, Toronto

Definitely take the candy away – my kids would dismantle the whole house if we let them eat as much as they wanted. I'm not anti-candy, though – I've seen some people give out raisins, juice boxes or toothbrushes, which I think is a little too moralistic. My son is only three, so he's just getting into Halloween, but we let my daughter, who is five and a half, pick out a portion of her treats to eat that night, and then we hide the rest. (One year we tried to convince her that the 'candy fairy' took it away, but she didn't buy it.) She knows it's still around, and it's a bargaining tool – I freely admit that I'll bribe her with a lollipop from time to time. ☺