

Halloween Tips for Parents

Before Halloween:

- Start preparing your child early. Help them understand the concept of Halloween. Fun songs, books, or movies are a great way to prepare. Take your child to a Halloween store and let them dress up as Dora the Explorer, Peter Pan, or their favourite cartoon character. Build up the excitement!
- Create a visual story of what Halloween may be like for your child, with some pictures or drawings. This will help your child prepare for the day's activities.
- Try on costumes before Halloween. If the costume is uncomfortable or doesn't fit right, it may cause unnecessary distress. Practice dressing up in costumes or trick-or-treating around the house to teach your child what to expect and how to act when the "big day" arrives. Act out specific scenarios. For example, someone may ask them, "What are you dressed up as?" or say "I love your costume!"
- If your child does not like their costume, don't make them wear it. Instead, try to uncover the reason they don't like it. After you talk with your child, they may gradually get used to the costume. Have them wear it for short periods of time at increasing intervals.
- Consider a Halloween costume that fits over your child's regular clothes, such as butterfly wings or a cape.
- If you are handing out candy, practice with your child and prepare them for disruptions throughout the evening.
- Do a walk-through of the neighborhood ahead of time. Choose the houses you are going to visit and tell your neighbors what to expect and how to approach your child. Make sure there are not any spooky decorations or blinking lights that could upset your child.
- Practice going to a neighbor's door, ringing the bell or knocking on the door and receiving candy. Be clear with your child that you are not going into the houses.

Halloween Day:

- Know your child's limits. If your child is not comfortable trick-or-treating, you can start by going to three houses. Assess how your child did and visit more houses next year.
- You may want to go to familiar homes such as Aunt and Uncles, Grandparents, etc.
- Don't worry if you end up taking their costume off, this is all about exposure and repetition. Perhaps they made it three houses with it on. Next year, they may do more!
- Take your child to a community activity (e.g. school festival or a neighborhood party)
- Partner with family and friends your child likes. Peers can be excellent trick-or-treat models.

- If you plan to hand out candy, give your child the option to hand some out. During the day, practice greeting people and giving out candy.
- Try going to a private party. This can be a way to have Halloween success for many, especially those on special diets. Bring a few homemade treats and mention your child's special diet to the host.
- Try hosting a Halloween Play Date. You can choose how many people come and what happens. Remember, you can still stroll down the street together at some point.
- If your child is afraid of going out at night, plan indoor or daytime Halloween activities. Sensory issues can include sensitivities to both light and dark. If your child can't handle walking in the dark, especially with all the people dressed in costumes, your local mall can be a great alternative. But be prepared for crowds of people as malls also get busy.
- **Arrive early, be flexible, and have FUN!** The more confident and at ease you are, the more fun your child will have. Make mental notes throughout the evening to make next year even more successful.