

Healthy Halloween Parties & Meals for Children

Childhood obesity is increasing at an alarming rate in America. If you host a children's Halloween party or have a small event for your family, help the kids focus more on having fun and less on eating candy and other unhealthy treats. Get them up and moving! Serve healthful foods that children with diabetes and other health-related dietary restrictions can enjoy.

Promote Physical Activity

Get kids up and moving to use the calories they consume. Let them dunk for apples, walk through a haunted house, decorate pumpkins, pin a heart on a scarecrow, go on a hayride and paint faces or temporary tattoos. Replace candy and other high-sugar, high-fat treats with small, inexpensive toy treats that encourage physical activity. These may include bouncy balls, jump ropes, sidewalk chalk (for drawing hopscotch or foursquare game), plastic or foam fliers, and beanbags for hacky sack.

Serve Healthful Foods

Put a special Halloween face on familiar, nutritious foods that you already serve by making a few easy changes. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Brains With Blood and Pus: Serve spaghetti and marinara sauce with shredded cheese, and call it "brains with blood and pus." Kids will love eating "gross" food on Halloween, and you will know they are getting a healthful dinner.

Halloween Pasta: Check grocery stores, food specialty stores or craft stores for pasta that comes in Halloween shapes. Use in your favorite pasta recipe.

Witches Brew Punch: To make individual servings, top apple juice or orange juice with a

small scoop of orange sherbet, vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt. Or, add a few drops of green food coloring to milk, then top with a small scoop of lime sherbet, vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt, if desired.

When serving a large group, you can prepare the brew in a punch bowl. To make the punch more interesting, float a frozen hand and 12 gummy spiders in it. Add a gummy spider to each of 12 water-filled compartments in an ice cube tray and freeze for at least 4 hours. Make the frozen hand from a disposable, powder-free, clear vinyl or poly glove approved for food handling. Fill the glove with water, tie or seal the end and freeze it for at least 4 hours. At serving time, remove the glove from the hand-shaped ice.

Popcorn: A cup of popcorn (popped) contains only 31 calories when popped without added fat, making it a healthy choice. It also provides fiber (roughage) that the body needs every day. Here are three ways to give popcorn seasonal flare for Halloween.

Halloween Party Popcorn: Combine popcorn with your choice of other ingredients, including raisins and other dried fruits, nuts, gummy worms, candy corn and orange/black candies, such as jelly beans or M & M's®. Serve the mixture with a scoop from a large bowl, or fill a self-closing sandwich bag with popcorn mixture for each child. Combining Halloween candy with popcorn allows you to cut back on the total amount of candy served.

Bony Fingers: Pour popcorn into clear gloves. Use disposable, powder-free vinyl or poly gloves approved for food handling. Tie the ends of gloves with orange and black ribbon.

Ghosts: To make popcorn ghosts, wrap small popcorn balls in plastic wrap. Place each wrapped ball in the middle of a large, sturdy white napkin. Tie the napkin together over the popcorn ball with white string so the ends of the napkin hang out to form the body. Draw on a scary face using a black marker.

Witches' Smiles: Core and cut a red-skinned apple (leave skin on) into long, vertical slices that are about ½" wide. Spread one side of apple with a small amount of peanut butter and place on top of a second slice so it looks like the two lips of a mouth. Make decayed teeth by sticking raisins between the red "lips." If you make these ahead of time, coat any exposed apple flesh with a little orange or pineapple juice to keep the apple from turning brown.

Ghosts: On each child's plate serve a mound of mashed potatoes with two slices of black olives positioned near the top for eyes. Prepare the mashed potatoes with low-fat or fat-free milk and soft or liquid margarine to reduce the fat and calories. If served the traditional way with milk and butter, the potatoes will contain about 200 calories per ½ cup serving.

Jack-O-Lantern Pizzas: Make mini-pizzas from your favorite recipe. Top with shredded cheese and let children make jack-o-lantern faces with bits of cut-up black or green olives. Bake as usual. Or, pat purchased refrigerator biscuits into 4-inch circles and top with pizza sauce, shredded cheese and cut-up olive eyes. Place on a greased baking sheet. In a

preheated oven, bake at 350° F for 12 to 15 minutes or until crusts are lightly browned.

Jack-O-Lantern Burgers: Top hamburgers with cheese slices from which you have cut out eyes, noses and mouths to make jack-o-lantern faces.

Monsterwiches: Let each child spread a piece of bread with cheese spread or peanut butter. Next, let them make monsterwiches by adding toppings of various vegetable pieces. For example, make eyes from small slices of black and green olives, lips from slices of red pepper, and hair from shredded lettuce or thin carrots strips shaved off with a vegetable peeler.

Refer to [HGIC 4112, *Healthy Halloween Treats*](#) for more tips on celebrating Halloween the healthy way. It contains trick-or-treating information, including other healthful food and non-food treats to offer children.

This information has been reviewed and adapted for use in South Carolina by Janis G. Hunter, HGIC Nutrition Specialist, and Katherine L. Cason, Professor, Food Science and Human Nutrition Department, Clemson University. (New 10/10.)

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