

**Halloween can be a scary experience for many children. A little planning in advance can go a long way towards making it a fun holiday for everyone.**



You can find a fabulous [archived article](#) (Oct. 2010) on our website about Halloween. Here are a few highlights:

---Many kids will love the great sensory experiences of Halloween, from dipping their hands into the insides of a pumpkin, bobbing for apples or exploring buckets of "worms" (cold cooked spaghetti) and "eyeballs" (grapes). Others will prefer painting faces on the outside of a pumpkin and eating gummy worms.

---Think about how your child will react to Halloween activities, and let them know it is ok to not participate. Consider hosting an event, perhaps for just a few people, and with activities your child can handle. If trick or treating is difficult for your child, let them stay home and give out the candy at your home, or make "dirt cups" together, or bake/ decorate Halloween cookies or cupcakes together. Plan ahead by recording or renting a non-threatening Halloween movie like "It's the Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown".

---Consider how your child will react to costumes, including painted faces, masks, and (usually inexpensive) materials. It's ok for your kid to not wear a costume, wear a sports team t-shirt as a costume, or a favorite piece of clothing incorporated into a creative character costume. Clue in your child's teacher ahead of time if the school has a major Halloween parade and your child does not want to participate.

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This [blog](#) offered a great take on solving Halloween costume issues for children with sensory issues: "The more sensitive your child is to fabrics, tags, and seams, the more you should aim towards homemade costumes. Take what they actually like to wear, and figure out how to make it into something else. Sweats? Give them a lab coat and a stethoscope for a doctor (or vet, so they can carry their stuffed animal!). Another way is picking a costume that they are SO OVER THE MOON about that they will wear it. It is only a matter of an hour or so. Or, my favorite, scrap the costume idea and let them go as themselves. There are DOZENS of book characters out there like "Amber Brown" or "Junie B. Jones" or "Hubie" (from Black Lagoon Series). Pick a regular kid from your child's favorite book, and there you go-instant costume no scratchy things required. : ) Follow your child's lead on this. Every kid is different and you can have a great Halloween regardless of the costume."



## **TIP OF THE MONTH**

### **from OT Marcia Podvey:**

With Halloween fast approaching it is a good idea to think and plan ahead, especially for those children who have sensory needs. Buy the costumes early. Be sure the costume is comfortable and something your child has picked out. Have your child practice wearing the costume around the house and make sure it is easy to take on and off. Hoods and masks can be particularly uncomfortable for tactile sensitive children. It is also a good idea to plan your Trick-or-Treating route ahead of time. Share the route with your child so they know what to expect and so you can avoid neighborhood "haunted" houses, etc. Social Stories (a short, simple story about what to expect or that helps explain something for a child) are a great way to prepare and practice trick or treating etiquette.

Finally, once you have collected all that candy, have your child try to open the wrappers on their own. Although, the candy is not the healthiest, opening the packaging is great for finger strengthening and coordination!

## **Happy Halloween!**