



Trick or Treat Tips from the P.R.O.S.
Parents & Relatives **O**utsmarting the **S**yndrome!

Candy Storage (before & after):

IDEA: If you need to purchase many bags of candy or typically have a large amount of candy you want to keep after Halloween, purchase a plastic container with lid and give to a relative or neighbor to keep for you.

WHY: No need to keep candy stored in your house.

IDEA: Make trick or treating a family event. Parents and/or relatives dress up and walk with your children. Put a sign on your door that a neighbor is also distributing candy for your home.

WHY: Removing the candy bowl displayed at your home reduces arguments before and after the scheduled trick-or-treat time. Instead, make the evening a family time to enjoy with the kids. Also, walking reduces stress.

IDEA: Check with the school to see if the Art Teachers or other teachers (not your child's) could use candy for upcoming projects. (Tootsie rolls make great log cabins for Thanksgiving & Christmas projects. Gumdrops and licorice sticks are perfect for gingerbread houses.) This is also a good time to make sure that these candy projects will not be displayed in hallways or display cases your child may pass during the school day.

WHY: Talking to school staff serves two objectives. First, it increases communication and awareness as well as the level of cooperation between the parents and school during the "food-filled" holiday months. Second, it helps you get the candy out of the home while at the same time you are making a useful donation to the school.

IDEA: Ask neighbors or relatives if they need supplies to make any holiday desserts. Many families use M&Ms (all sizes) for cookies as well as hard candy to melt in some drop style cookies. Make sure these desserts will not be presented when your family is visiting.

WHY: Talking to neighbors and relatives serves two objectives. First, it increases communication and awareness. Second, it increases the level of cooperation between the parents, neighbors and relatives.

IDEA: Get rid of as much candy as possible. Throwing away is always an option. Place the candy to be thrown away in a paper sack.

WHY: Removing candy from the home and concealing it in paper sacks eliminates arguments.

Costumes:

IDEA: Consider costumes that use sweatpants with elastic around ankles. Take out the elastic and have a wide opening for legs.

WHY: Modifying costumes eliminates the possibility that treats may be picked up or palmed and not placed up the pants leg (when pretending to tie shoe) or down the waist band to be "caught" and stored at the ankle for later consumption.

IDEA: Try not to tuck shirts in pants, if possible.

WHY: Modifying costumes eliminates the possibility that treats may be picked up or palmed and dropped down the neck-line or short sleeve shirt to be “caught” at the waist line for later consumption.

IDEA: Try to find jackets or coats with the least amount of pockets or sew pockets closed with slip stitch to be removed later. Remember to check for inner pockets.

WHY: So treats that may be picked up or palmed are not put into pockets for later consumption or to eat during trick-or-treating.

Trick-or-Treat Bags:

IDEA: Allow your child to carry the treat bag only when at the trick-or-treat stop. In between stops, a parent should carry the bag (especially if you use a “large opening” bag, as described below).

WHY: This reduces the child’s temptation to take candy from the bag during their trick-or-treat time.

IDEA: Make a bag with a larger opening by sewing or gluing wire, a wooden embroidery hoop, or very stiff pipe cleaners into the top of the bag.

WHY: Modifying the treat bag makes it easier for you to see if hands are reaching in. It also allows you to make sure treats are dropped into the bag and not being palmed by your child.

IDEA: Consider sewing in strong Velcro® to the bag to keep it closed until time to open. Note: some children may need help at each stop to open the bag to collect their treat depending on the strength of the Velcro® (and that is not necessarily a bad thing).

WHY: So there is a lesser temptation to take candy from the bag during their trick-or-treat time.

IDEA: If your plans are to limit stops to 10-20 homes, consider preparing your own bags of pre-packaged treats for your child that your neighbors pass out when you and your child come to “treat”. This is time-consuming, but may make the difference between an enjoyable night and one fraught with temptations and arguments. If the neighbor doesn’t know your child, tell them you will “cue” them by introducing your child by name or use some other special signal. The neighbor can present the child with a “special treat” because of the child’s great costume, exceptional manners, etc.

WHY: This strategy helps to educate the community and also gives you an opportunity to present neighbors with a brochure about PWS. Parent & child anxiety over what they are getting or going to get may also be reduced. Most of all, this strategy is especially helpful with the days AFTER Halloween since now there won’t be a lot of treats to throw away/hide/give away. You may want to include some special “out of the ordinary” low-calorie food surprises in some of the bags that can be included into your child’s diet the following week.

To order catalogs concerning small individual treat bags and trinket items in bulk, view websites:

Discount School Supplies – www.DiscountSchoolSupply.com

Oriental Trading – www.orientaltrading.com

RI Novelty – www.rinovelty.com

US TOY – www.ustoy.com

While Trick-or-Treating:

IDEA: Place glow-in-the-dark bracelets on both of your child’s wrists.

WHY: This is a safety issue as well as allowing you a better view of what your child’s hands are doing from a distance. Watch for movements of reaching in & out of treat bags, pockets or other children’s bags. Also, watch that candy is not being palmed and placed in familiar yards or bushes to be retrieved at a later date.

IDEA: Teach social skills and responses. This strategy helps your child to understand and respond appropriately to questions or “teasing” from a homeowner (ex. “What are you?” “Oh, you are scarring me right out of my shoes!” “What if I give you a trick instead of a treat?”)

WHY: All children should be taught to say “please” and “thank you” when receiving a treat or complement. When our children don’t understand, get scammed or behave inappropriately and are reprimanded, they respond with anxiety, stress and possible melt-down. Prepare your children **each year** so that they may have an enjoyable time.

IDEA: Talk to your child about scary masks or possible tricks such as someone jumping out to scare them or a passer by, items that drop from porch roofs or trees (like motion-activated spiders and ghosts).

WHY: This prepares your child for what might happen. Prepare your child **each year** so that they know what to expect and have an enjoyable time.

IDEA: **INSIST** on a “pick one” or “take one” rule at each home when the homeowner gives an option or just places a bowl on their porch. Walk up with your child to the door if the bowl is unattended and help them comply with this rule. Do not allow your child to request more treats from homeowners and have a clear consequence (discussed prior to trick-or-treating) when rule is not followed (ex. Eliminate stopping at one home).

WHY: Stress is reduced when you and your child know what is expected of each other

IDEA: Give your child a flashlight to hold as you walk between houses.

WHY: This is a safety strategy which also keeps your child’s hands occupied.

At Home – After Trick-or-Treating:

IDEA: Check all accessory pocket areas for possible hiding places.

WHY: A sheath for a sword, dagger, staff or gun can fit many rolls of sweet tarts or tootsie rolls!

IDEA: As you are helping your child out of their costume, do a subtle “pat down” to check for stored treats.

WHY: Popular stashes includes coats, pockets, hoods on jackets, socks, waist bands, and even underwear.

IDEA: For each piece of candy the child has received, offer a money value. The child then gets to pick out a special gift for them at the toy/book/music store. Some families let the child pick 5-parent approved items from their stash. One item can be added to their lunch box for the next 5 weeks as a special treat. Some children may be able to help count out the number of pieces with you.

WHY: Allows the child to enjoy trick-or-treating just like everyone else knowing they will receive a “treat” from the evening.