



Paragon Autism
S E R V I C E S
Making a Difference Together

Halloween Considerations for Parents and Caregivers

While Halloween can be fun for many children, Halloween can also be a time of confusion and anxiety for many children as well.

- Some children are rule governed. Children are taught throughout the year not to speak to or take candy from strangers; yet on Halloween this rule is deviated from.
- Some children have difficulty differentiating between reality and fantasy or difficulty comprehending pretend; yet, during Halloween people dress up as characters or scary creatures.
- Some children have difficulty with transitions or difficulty deviating from schedules. Trick or Treat or Trunk or Treat events require many transitions and deviations from normal, everyday schedules.
- Some children have Sensory issues and experience sensitivity to various smells, sounds, textures.
- Some children have gastrointestinal issues or food allergies. Certain foods and treats can cause gastrointestinal distress or induce food allergies which can be harmful to some children.
- Some children have co-morbid diagnoses such as seizure disorder. Blinking lights could induce seizures.
- Some children want to socialize but present with social skill deficits or anxiety in social situations.
- Some children have receptive language deficits and do not understand directions to come when called, hold hands, stay with an adult, take one piece of candy, or wait until Mommy checks the candy. Other children have expressive language deficits and can't say Trick or Treat. Many children have difficulty waiting or accepting no.
- Some children lack environmental awareness and safety awareness.
- Some children run out of area, away from crowds and adults, or towards items of interest. Project Lifesaver is a tracking device which can assist with locating your child if they elope.

The reverse side offers accommodations and strategies for parents and caregivers to follow to address the above mentioned considerations and concerns.



Halloween Tips for Parents and Caregivers

Below are some accommodations and strategies for Parents and Caregivers to utilize to help make Halloween more fun and safe if any of the above considerations are concerns for their child.

- Contact your local law enforcement agency to inquire about and apply for Project Lifesaver.
- Explain Halloween rules to your child many times before Halloween. Explain that they can only speak to and take candy from strangers on Halloween when with a parent or trusted adult. After Halloween go over stranger danger rules. Some children may require to see the rules in picture or text form.
- Read stories to your child about Halloween or develop social stories. Social stories are written in the child's perspective and outline what and how to expect.
- Take practice runs. Practice walking the area where your child will be Trick or Treating. Practice walking and staying with adults, waiting, etc. ahead of time. Enlist the aid of a few trusted neighbors to utilize as practice houses.
- Give treats which meet your child's dietary restrictions to a few neighbors or the organization or school holding the Trunk or Treat or party ahead of time. Discuss strategies with the organization or school to make the event a success.
- Try to stay as close to normal schedule as possible and attempt to limit transitions by limiting the time out, only going out during daylight hours, or only going to familiar places.
- Avoid houses with flashing lights, loud noises, or big crowds.
- Avoid scratchy clothing, masks, and clothing which is too hot or too cold. Avoid makeup which is oily, sticky, or smells.
- Allow your child to pick out his/her costume which may even be limited to a favorite tee-shirt or pajama costume.
- Prepare yourself that this may not be the year that your child chooses to go Trick or Treating or Trunk or Treating. Maybe he/she could help hand out the candy or maybe you will have to keep your light off.
- Carry pre-selected treats as a back-up for when your child requests or waits appropriately.
- Praise your child for following the rules, walking with an adult, coming when called, or holding hands.
- Praise your child when they wait, or accept no or not now when they can't have their treat right away.
- Praise your child for socializing with other children.
- Honor your child's request to stop the activity.
- Accept if your child doesn't want to go out Trick or Treating this year and hold out hope for next year.
- After Halloween revisit Stranger Danger rules.

