



Markets

Reports

Research

Portfolio

Planning

Help

Login

Register

Ticker/Name Search

Search

Stocks

- By Industry
- By Name

Mutual Funds

- By Family
- By Name
- By Objective

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- United States
 - Canada
 - Mexico
 - Brazil
 - Austria
 - Belgium
 - France
 - Germany
 - Ireland
 - Italy
 - Netherlands
 - Spain
 - Sweden
 - Switzerland
 - United Kingdom
 - Euro Zone
 - Australia
 - China
 - Japan
 - Korea
 - All Countries
- Mkt Indices
- Industry Groups
 - U.S. Markets
 - Non-U.S. Markets
- Real Estate
- National Overview
 - Office Vacancy Rate
 - Industrial Vacancies
- Futures
- Bean Complex
 - Currency
 - Energy
 - Financials
 - Food & Fiber
 - Grains & Wheat
 - Index
 - LiveStock
 - Metal

[Back](#)

Trick-or-treat without cheating on your diet

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Oct. 22--Don't let one night of spooks spoil your diet. Follow these tips -- compiled with help from diet support service Trimtalk.com and Omaha dietitian Joy Rutar -- to avoid eating more Halloween candy than you dole out this year:

1. Wait as long as possible to buy candy for trick-or-treaters. If you've already stocked up, store treats in a hard-to-reach spot. Outta sight, outta mind, outta mouth.
2. Buy candy you don't really like -- gobs of licorice if you hate licorice, hard candies if you're a chocolate lover.
3. Consider giving snack-size packs of raisins or Fig Newtons; sugar-free gum; stickers or small toys. All provide a healthier alternative for you and your ghoulish guests.
4. Work in a workout before nightfall -- a pre-emptive strike against the potential calorie fest.
5. Eat a healthy dinner with plenty of water before you fill the trick-or-treat bowl, make the neighborhood rounds or head off to a Halloween party.
6. Brush your teeth before trick-or-treating begins. "If I have a clean mouth," Rutar said, "I don't want that sugary taste."
7. Keep your hands and mouth busy. Have a game, book, magazine, craft or movie at hand to entertain yourself -- and keep your fingers out of that bowl -- while you wait for the next group of goblins. Chew gum or chat with a friend to occupy your mouth.

8. Choose lesser evils. Make a bowl of 94 percent fat-free microwave popcorn to snack on while you hand out sugar- or fat-laden treats. Or, if you simply must sample from the treat bowl, go for hard or gummy candies. They generally contain less fat and calories than caramel- or chocolate-based candies. And they take longer to eat.
9. Count your wrappers. It's easy to mindlessly blow through an entire bag of treats. Keep and count the wrappers so you'll know how much you've really consumed.

10. Toss -- or sell -- any leftover candy after Halloween. At least one Omaha orthodontist, Dr. Barbara Ries, buys back Halloween candy to keep her braces-wearing patients from eating it. Ries pays \$1 for each pound delivered to her office, 624 N. 129th St., Suite 100.

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