

# Halloween Tips for Autism Families



Let your child know what to expect ahead of time, give them as much detail as possible, and be sure to keep realistic expectations. Halloween can be a big change in routine, so planning ahead is crucial.

A visual guide filled with photos and/ or video can be an invaluable tool to visualise what is going to happen.



YouTube is a great tool to show autistic children examples of the types of costumes they are likely to see on Halloween, and what people may say when they answer the door. Again, be sure to reinforce realistic expectations and explain that there may be some houses where your child knocks on the door and it is not answered.

Practicing social stories to certain questions they are likely to be asked about their costumes or phrases they may hear will help reduce anxiety and fear. Also, if your child has a certain preference for sweets, explain that they may not always get the ones they like or want and that they will receive a range of sweets.



Planning your trick or treat route and walking the route in advance will also help reduce any surprises or scares. Ensure to point out the houses you will stop at and those you will not. Putting the route on paper can also be a great help.

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When it comes to costumes, the most important thing to consider is how your child feels about them. When choosing a costume, make sure you choose it together and that they try it before the event. Ensure the costume doesn't include any fabrics, colours, tags, or textures they do not like. Remember wearing a costume can be very stressful for an autistic child, so have your child practice wearing their costume before Halloween, to ensure it is comfortable and fits properly.

Ear defenders on Halloween, similar to Bonfire Night, are great for autistic children and young adults with sensory processing issues who are sensitive to noise and certain sounds.



Not all children are going to be comfortable going trick or treating. Instead plan indoor or daytime Halloween activities, such as handing out sweets to trick or treaters. If your child would prefer to stay home, prepare them in advance for knocks on the door and handing out sweets. Practicing greeting people in the daytime can be a great way to take any fear out of it.

Take your child to a community activity or event, such as a school Halloween party or a neighbourhood party where your child knows people and is comfortable.



Partner with family and friends that your child likes and is comfortable with. This will reassure them, reduce any fear and anxiety.