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**Helpful hints to make Halloween a treat for children of all abilities**

With Halloween just around the corner, parents and children across the nation are decorating their homes, brainstorming costume ideas, and buying candy to hand out. But parents of children with intellectual or developmental disabilities have a few extra things to consider when preparing for this spooky day.

“For children with autism or other disabilities, planning ahead for a special day like Halloween can really help them to transition from their day-to-day routines to a new unique schedule,” Jeanne Marshall, vice president of services and CPO for Easterseals Midwest, said. “A day with a lot of different activities like Halloween – where there’s trick-or-treating, passing out candy, school parties, and more – can be overwhelming for anyone. We want to help parents and their children have the best time possible on these special days.”

 With these helpful hints, you can make sure there’s nothing scary about trick-or-treating.

1. Help familiarize your child with what trick-or-treating may be like by practicing with a neighbor or at your own house. Rehearse going up to a door, knocking or ringing the doorbell, and asking for candy in whatever way your child us most comfortable with.
2. Set your trick-or-treating route in advance. Keep your route close to home, in case you need to get back quickly. Avoid houses that may be too scary, gory, have excessive or flashing lights, or decorations that may make your child uncomfortable.
3. Walk your route a few days before Halloween to help familiarize your child with it.
4. Encourage your child to try his or her costume in advance. If something is uncomfortable, make modifications.
5. Before trick-or-treating, discuss and set rules on how much candy your child can eat and when.
6. Let your child stop when they want to, even if it’s only a house or two in. Take a break or head home whenever you feel is best.
7. Make sure your child has identifying information on them, such as a tag, card, or bracelet in case you get separated.
8. Put something on your child such as a glow stick necklace to help spot them if your neighborhood gets crowded with trick-or-treaters.
9. Don’t underestimate your neighbors! Talk to them beforehand and explain the needs of your child.
10. Remember, it’s OK to stay at home. Create your own Halloween traditions that fit your family’s needs, like a special movie night, baking Halloween-themed goodies, or even passing out candy.

Remember, there’s no right or wrong way to celebrate Halloween, as long as your family is having fun. With these helpful tips, you can set you and your child up for success for a truly memorable Halloween.

**About Easterseals Midwest |** Easterseals Midwest is a nonprofit organization changing the way the world defines and views disability by making profound, positive differences in people’s lives every day. The organization employs 1,800 employees delivering services to more than 5,000 individuals statewide through four divisions: Autism Services, Community Living Services, Early Childhood Services, and Employment Services.