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## Guest Blogger: Fed up With Halloween

 OCTOBER 18, 2011 at 7:00 AM in [UNCATEGORIZED](#)



I am very excited to be a guest blogger for Fed Up With Lunch. My name is [Dave Soleil](#) and I am a stay-at-home dad in Georgia where childhood obesity is the second highest in the nation. Last year on Halloween, I got fed up too.

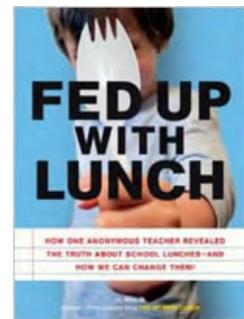
As children in the neighborhood made the annual rounds to trick-or-treat, I saw kids with pillow cases three-quarters packed with candy. I saw overweight parents driving cars along side their children because their condition made it too difficult to walk around the neighborhood. I heard stories of children attending multiple pre-Halloween "trunk-or-treat" events hosted by various youth organizations. I also talked with health-conscious neighbors who were too embarrassed to let their kids trick-or-treat because the day focused entirely on binge eating candy.

As I dropped another box of raisins into a vast sea of candy, I felt alone and ashamed of the unhealthy environment we had created for our children. I decided then that I would dedicate myself to creating the healthy world that our kids deserve.

I wanted to bring communities together to raise awareness about childhood obesity and I wanted it to happen quickly like... a flash mob. So, [The Movement](#) was born. The Flash Mob for Healthier Kids will take place during the week of Halloween, Oct. 24th - 31st. Flash mobs will perform in towns and cities around the country in support of healthier kids. [The Rockstar Nutritionist, Jill Jayne](#) is providing great music and choreography. You pick the time and place that works for you and send us the video which we will edit together with all the other flash mobs videos. Whether you are three people or three thousand people, we want you to use this opportunity to bring people and organizations together in support of healthier kids.

In addition to [The Movement](#), we are also launching [Healthy Halloween House](#). Our web site has a parents' pledge and many healthy and non-food trick-or-treat alternatives. Our pledge is:

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“As a [Healthy Halloween House](#), I pledge to provide a Trick-or-Treat alternative for kids that is not candy or junk food. I believe we can create a healthier world for our kids that strengthens our community without contributing to the epidemic of childhood obesity.”

We are also offering [Healthy Halloween House](#) signs as a free download or as yard signs at cost. We are even encouraging neighborhoods to try and get more than 50% participation to become a Healthy Halloween Neighborhood!

According to the CDC, kids born after the year 2000 are predicted to have a shorter lifespan than their parents. However, I don't believe in probabilities. I believe in possibilities. We can create a healthier world for our kids. It is time to provide fun and thoughtful alternatives year round that don't make our kids sick. I hope you will join us and help spread the word.

As I like to say, “Eat your pumpkin. Let your candy rot on the porch.”

16

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## 13 Responses to *Guest Blogger: Fed Up With Halloween*



**John** October 18, 2011 at 8:38 am #

I always feel conflicted at Halloween because I share a lot of the same feelings that you do, but it was always my favorite holiday as a child. Some of the strategies I use to try and come to terms with trick-or-treating are to stay in my own neighborhood (instead of flocking to richer neighborhoods that give out more/bigger candy), avoid things like the “trunk or treat” you mention, and finally at the end of the night we let our kids pick out a small amount of candy and buy the rest from them. They get to buy toys or books, and we throw out the excess or I give it to coworkers who are old enough to make their own decisions about health.

REPLY



**Cindy** October 18, 2011 at 8:47 am #

I'm torn on this one too. My kids don't get nearly the amount of candy that I got as a child and they love it so much. Who wouldn't? What I yearn for is that Halloween as a truly exceptional day where children are allowed to proceed with abandon. I think the rest of the year has become too infested with sugar. If giant bags of candy only happened once a year, it would make Halloween more fun and we'd have healthier kids.

REPLY



**melpy** October 18, 2011 at 8:55 am #

I don't have children but I am a teacher who refuses to give out candy as a



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reward (technically food rewards are prohibited but there are plenty of teachers who break this rule). This year I have decided not to participate in Halloween due to schedule conflicts but I have been torn about the whole “candy giving” in the first place. I think that Halloween can be fun, dressing up and taking a walk are fun and healthy activities.

I think it comes down to having very specific guidelines for your children. Obviously the safety rules like not eating candy that hasn't been checked by a parent is crucial. We didn't even really get to see the candy until it had all been checked. I think that parents can use this as the first line of defense to get rid of some unwanted candy. My mother would give out the leftovers to the last few people who came to the house. Limiting the number of houses you go to is another good idea. Our favorite part was swapping candy at the end of the night. We were allowed to keep some of it and we were limited how much we could eat a day. I think we were allowed one to two pieces a day depending on size of candy and age of child. I know parents don't want to be the bad guy but promoting healthy habits and putting your foot down is necessary once in a while.

REPLY



**Julie** October 18, 2011 at 9:11 am #

I'm all for healthy Halloween but how do you get kids to eat the raisins? You know they will just throw them away. Did anyone ever eat the apples they were given on Halloween? I'd love to bake something but their parents would be afraid there was a razor blade inside. Then there is the matter of revenge. If I tried to give raisins I would find in the morning my house has been TP'd and then there is the matter of the belligerent expression on the kids face when you try to give them a pack of raisins. The best I could do is just not be home. Hopefully they won't destroy anything while I'm gone.

REPLY



**John** October 18, 2011 at 11:24 am #

I always hated the raisins. Not because they weren't candy, just because they were raisins. It's a shame, though, that baking is no longer socially acceptable, because the razor thing didn't really happen (I mean, I think something like it happened once, but there wasn't an epidemic like it's portrayed.) When I was little I used to look forward to this one lady's house that always had popcorn balls.

REPLY



**JoAnn** October 18, 2011 at 9:17 am #

Maybe the candy isn't the biggest part of the problem...I feel that so much of it is parenting. I mean, these kids aren't taking themselves trick or treating, or to community events (At least mine aren't...maybe I am naive). Why not say it's time to go home when the bag is half full? Or let the kids eat what they want for 2 days and then make the candy disappear? Or don't go out to 3 different neighborhoods and then the mall to get more candy. And of course, there is always the 6 week old in a stroller, so mom and dad can eat the candy! But then again, it's easier to just blame the sugar. Sugar doesn't have any feelings that are going to get hurt when you tell it that it's all it's fault.

REPLY

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**Liz** October 18, 2011 at 9:28 am <#>

I'm all for a healthier Halloween, but I still think my kids should get to be kids. (Maybe that's an unpopular sentiment. Oh, well.) They eat healthy on a regular basis. And on Halloween their candy consumption is limited. After Halloween we go through their candy and pull out the bulk, which my husband takes to his office. (He works with college students.) Then our kids are allowed to choose one or two pieces after lunch or dinner every day until it is gone. Moderation is the key. Also, if you don't want to give out healthy food, why not give out non-consumable items. For instance, this year we are giving out spider rings and other things like that.

REPLY



**Michelle** October 18, 2011 at 9:40 am <#>

When I was a kid, I always had to give my loot to my parents to look through (checking for those razorblades, after all), at which point they would let me pick out a couple pieces to eat. They generally kept it in a place where I couldn't get at it without asking for permission first. It was given out bit by bit, and when it reached a point where only the "yucky" candy was left, it would get tossed. When I have kids, this is a system I'd probably use as well, because it encourages moderation but doesn't completely eliminate the fun of candy on Halloween.

REPLY



**Velicia** October 18, 2011 at 9:50 am <#>

I can't help but remember how much I hated receiving fruit in my Halloween basket as a child, which although I've always liked fruit, did not get eaten amid the other treats. However, as some others mentioned, I was also limited by my parents as to how much Halloween candy I could eat at once, and during the rest of the year my parents also limited my junk food intake and provided healthy foods regularly. I don't think the problem is Halloween so much as many children are given too much fat, salt and sugar to eat throughout the year.

REPLY



**beantownprepster** October 18, 2011 at 9:54 am <#>

Somehow I don't think that one day devoted to candy is the root cause of childhood obesity. Perhaps one should focus on 365 of healthy eating to allow for one day of overboard candy consumption. I think the whole "healthy halloween" movement is a bit preachy and ridiculous. Kids should be allowed to enjoy and appreciate a fun American tradition. Furthermore, even if there are children who end up with pillowcases full of candy, they should be taught to portion it out and enjoy it as a treat. I, most certainly, will be doling out my bags of fun size candy with a smile and a "Happy Halloween" to every child.

REPLY



**Lisa Leake** October 18, 2011 at 11:27 am <#>

We are absolutely on board with not giving out candy this Halloween BUT we

are also not planning on handing out raisins or apples. There are so many other fun ways to celebrate Halloween, which I shared on our “20 ways to do Halloween without candy” blog post <http://www.100daysofrealfood.com/2011/10/07/real-food-tips-20-ways-to-do-halloween-without-candy/>. Also, I think the biggest problem is that Halloween is no longer one of the few special occasions where my kids are offered candy and sweets. They also get them for every kid’s birthday in their class, school events and rewards, good behavior from their teacher, sporting events, playdates, parties with friends, as well as all the other holidays throughout the year including the entire month of December. If it was just Halloween that would be one thing, but unfortunately it is not and in the end the amount of junk food that our precious children are getting is overkill! There are just too many other non-food (or non-junk food) related ways to excite and reward young children for us to continue to allow them to eat this much processed and artificial “food.” Just my two cents!

REPLY



**Catherine** October 18, 2011 at 11:48 am <#>

Childhood obesity is a day to day problem, not a Halloween issue. If you want to make Halloween into an obesity awareness day, then get together some stats about childhood obesity and how unhealthy processed food is, etc. Halloween is not the problem, American parenting and the SAD diet for the whole year is the problem. My 4.5yo eats healthy everyday, a few days of candy will not make him fat or ill. I did decide to hand out Halloween themed erasers and small toys, etc, this year But only because he has multiple food allergies and cannot eat any treat handed out anywhere. The thing I’ve learned from his food allergies is that the American culture is too obsessed with food. We cannot meet up for an hour without bringing snacks. There was a boy on his soccer team, who ate through the whole hour every week. It was only about 50mins really (with multiple water breaks). We don’t need to every minute of everyday.

My son and I will go trick or treating this year and I will give him a few pieces of safe candy (that I brought with us) while we are out. Then I trade him his candy for a toy (when he gets older, I may buy it with cash and let him go shopping). I take all his candy into work for my co-workers. Win, Win, Win.

P.S. my son loves the houses that hand out temporary tattoos 😊

REPLY



**Jessica** October 18, 2011 at 11:48 am <#>

I’m giving out small change in recycled easter eggs, held closed with halloween stickers. Yeah, they’ll probably just use it to buy candy. But at least there is the possibility they will buy something more virtuous.

REPLY

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## THE LUNCH PHOTOS

