



THE SWEET SPOT

Enjoy Halloween Treats Without Scaring Your Health, or Your Wallet

Halloween does not have to open the door to weeks of mindless snacking, overspending and “I’ll get back on track in January” thinking. With a little intention, you can enjoy the treats you love and set a thoughtful tone for the busy holiday season ahead.

Give Yourself Permission to Enjoy the Candy

Healthy choices are not about pretending candy does not exist. Instead, try a quick “worth it” rule: choose the treats you genuinely enjoy, eat them slowly and skip the ones you would never buy on purpose. This shifts Halloween from automatic grazing to intentional indulgence.

Don't Let Candy Be the Main Course

Whether you are heading to a party, walking the neighborhood or handing out treats at home, eating a balanced meal beforehand can help keep your sweets consumption to a healthy portion. Many expert nutritionists encourage nutrient-dense meals built of protein, dairy, vegetables, fruits, healthy fats and whole grains. That does not mean replacing every treat with celery sticks. Think festive and

satisfying: chili, apple slices with nut butter, roasted pumpkin seeds or soup before the evening begins. The goal is not to cancel the candy but to keep it from becoming the only option.

Be the Fun House, Without Overdoing It

Handing out candy is part of the fun. If you want variety, mix candy with budget-friendly nonfood options, such as glow sticks, stickers, temporary tattoos, pencils, spider rings or mini activity packs. Consider offering nonfood treats in a separate bowl to make Halloween more inclusive for children with food allergies.

Remember: Halloween Kicks Off Spending Season

Halloween often marks the beginning of a long stretch of seasonal spending. According to the National Retail Federation, consumers spend upwards of \$13 billion on Halloween to cover candy, costumes and decorations. Treating Halloween like a mini holiday budget can help you enjoy the fun without setting an expensive pattern for the months ahead.

- Set a Halloween spending limit before shopping.
- Buy candy closer to the holiday if early bags are hard to resist.
- Reuse decorations, trade costumes and thrift or borrow accessories.

Enjoy the Night, Then Reset

Halloween does not have to be a choice between full-size candy bars and a bowl of toothbrushes. Instead, enjoy what you love, make choices with intention and keep both your health and your budget in mind. That way, you can celebrate the season without letting the candy bowl, or the checkout cart run the show.

U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Dietary Guidelines for Americans,” [realfood.gov](https://www.realfood.gov), Accessed Sept. 11, 2026.

Food Allergy Research & Education, “Teal Pumpkin Project,” foodallergy.org, Accessed Sept. 4, 2026.

National Retail Federation, “NRF Consumer Survey Finds Halloween Spending to Reach Record \$13.1 Billion,” [nrf.com](https://www.nrf.com), Accessed Sept. 4, 2026.



Your Heart Keeps Score Earlier Than You Think

Most people file heart trouble under "worry about it later." New research suggests the groundwork gets laid decades earlier than expected.

An August 2026 study published in the journal *Circulation* followed more than 1,200 adults in their early 20s. Shockingly, nearly 79% of these participants already showed early signs of cardiovascular-kidney-metabolic syndrome, or CKM, a term for the way heart health, kidney function and metabolism are connected. Some of the early signs included extra body fat, elevated blood pressure, higher cholesterol levels or higher blood sugar. Ultrasounds even found thickening in the artery walls of some participants, something usually seen in much older patients.

Part of what makes this easy to miss is that standard heart-risk calculators aren't built for those under 30 years old. You can feel completely fine while quiet changes, like extra belly fat, creeping blood pressure, or off-kilter cholesterol and blood sugar, add up in the background.

The upside is that the same daily habits that protect your heart also protect your kidneys and metabolism, and they pay off most when you start young.

A few practices worth focusing on:

- Move most days. Even a brisk 20-minute walk can be beneficial.
- Build meals around vegetables, fruit and whole grains, and ease off ultra-processed food.
- Protect your sleep, aiming for seven to nine hours a night.
- Skip tobacco and vaping.
- Know your numbers. Ask for blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar checks at your next appointment, and keep an eye on them over time.

None of these measures call for an overhaul. Small, steady choices in your 20s and 30s buy you real room to stay healthy later.



"79% of Young Adults Show Signs of Cardiovascular, Kidney, Metabolic Issues," Healthline, healthline.com, September 1, 2026.
"Life's Essential 8," American Heart Association, heart.org, accessed 2026.



MAKING SENSE OF HORROR THIS HALLOWEEN

At first glance, spending around two hours willingly subjecting your nervous system to creeping dread, silent slashers and pesky poltergeists might seem illogical. Still, millions of people continue to see horror films in theaters each year, making it the fastest-rising genre at the box office. So, why do we do it?

HORROR FANS, DEFINED

If you're not the type of person who likes to cuddle up under a fuzzy blanket on a rainy night with a classic creature feature, you might be wondering who is.

Through studies looking at the habits and responses of horror movie-watchers as well as haunted house visitors, researchers have come to define three overall types of horror fans: the "Adrenaline Junkie," the "White Knuckler" and the "Dark Coper."

Adrenaline Junkies: These fans are most motivated by the immediate rush and subsequent mood boost they experience by participating in thrill-seeking activities, like theme park rides. They might feel more "alive" due to their experience of fear.

White Knucklers: These fans endure their favorite spooky flicks not for the jump scares themselves, but for the sense of pride and accomplishment they experience once the credits have rolled.

Dark Copers: Typically motivated by real-life struggles, these fans use horror to make sense of a world they find scary, which can lead to self-discovery and personal growth. They may view the experience as a way to address anxiety or depression in a controlled setting.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

A 2022 study examined the reported benefits of haunted house attendees. The results indicated that the three different types of horror fans tend to experience unique benefits when participating in horror as leisure.

Those identified as Adrenaline Junkies most often reported "immediate enjoyment," those identified as White Knucklers reported "personal growth," and those identified as Dark Copers reported "both."

Additionally, a 2021 study found that horror fans and fans of "prepper" (for example, alien-invasion, apocalyptic or zombie) films exhibited less psychological distress and greater positive resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While these categories are broad and people are far more complex, the findings suggest that engaging with fears in a safe, controlled environment can foster enjoyment, personal growth, self-discovery and resilience.

So, why not dim the lights and give something spooky a try this Halloween season?

"Adrenaline junkies and white-knucklers: A quantitative study of fear management in haunted house visitors," Mathias Clasen et al., *Poetics*, April 2019.

"How Halloween Scares Can Soothe Anxiety," Delaney Rebernik, *TIME*, time.com, Oct. 27, 2025.

"Pandemic practice: Horror fans and morbidly curious individuals are more psychologically resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic," Coltan Scrivner et al., *Personality and Individual Differences*, Jan. 1, 2021.

"The Psychological Benefits of Scary Play in Three Types of Horror Fans," Coltan Scrivner et al., *Journal of Media Psychology*, Aug. 9, 2022.

"2023 Top-Grossing Movies in North America," The Numbers, the-numbers.com, Accessed Sept. 4, 2026.