

# Keeping Friends with Food Allergies Safe at Halloween and Always

by Amy Recob

Trick-or-treating can be a scary time of year for some, and not just because of the ghosts and goblins. For more than 3 million U.S. children living with food allergies, Halloween fun can actually turn fatal if treats containing food allergens are ingested.

For those who don't live with the daily challenges posed by this prevalent issue, it can be difficult to understand how traditional holiday treats can sometimes be so harmful. But before you buy all those gooey gummy candies and sweet sugared snacks this season, take a moment to pause and read the labels. You might be surprised by what you find.

Potentially dangerous ingredients such as wheat, milk, egg and soy are contained in many brands of licorice, fruit chews, chocolates and caramels, while an even wider range of candies are processed in plants that also process peanuts and tree nuts. These types of treats can cause a variety of physical reactions including hives, swelling, vomiting, wheezing or worse for food allergic children.

To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for every child this October, consider implementing some of the following tips if you're planning to host a party or welcome trick-or-treaters to your home, office, school or daycare center:

- **Read labels and look for candy that does not contain any allergy warnings.** By law, food manufacturers must indicate the presence of peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, milk, soy, eggs or wheat. These are the eight most common ingredients that make up 90 percent of all food allergic reactions.

- **Be aware of hidden food allergens contained in treats you would not expect.** Items like soy or traces of nuts can be found in unlikely places like lollipops or gummy candies.



On Halloween, BugaBees go trick-or-treating  
And come home with candy some shouldn't be eating.  
Treats touched by peanuts will make Cricket sick.  
She can't have a bite, not one little lick!

"No thank you," she says. "It's really okay.  
I can still have lots of fun without peanuts anyway!"

*"The BugaBees: Friends with Food Allergies" is a book that teaches children to remember the joy of friendship is far sweeter than any food they can, or in some cases, can't have.*

- **Be aware that different sizes of the exact same treat may contain different ingredient labels.** Snack-sized and standard-sized versions of the same brand of candy bar may be manufactured in different processing plants and therefore contain different allergy warnings.

- **Hand out candy with individualized labels so kids with allergies can determine if the treat is safe.** Some miniature-sized candies only contain food allergy information on the large bag they're bought in, not on each individual piece.

- **Pass out alternatives to snacks and candy such as: temporary tattoos, stickers, crayons, etc.** Non-food items are just as fun and are sure to be safe for children with food allergies.

- **Don't leave candy lying around the house that young children can easily get into without supervision.** Children under the age of six most likely cannot read labels or resist temptation of sweets that are easily accessible at parties or in homes other than their own.

- **Don't be shocked or offended if a child says "no thank you" to treats you offer them.** Children with food allergies understand the risks and are often their own best advocates in avoiding potentially harmful situations.

The extra care you take in selecting safe and alternative snacks will make a world of difference for those living with life-threatening food allergies. Because whether they're dressed as a fairy princess or a football player, the one thing each and every child aspires to be – at Halloween or any time of the year – is included, remembered and loved.



*Amy Recob is a freelance writer and author of "The BugaBees: Friends with Food Allergies." Amy's six-year-old daughter Mollie is allergic to peanuts and tree nuts and plans to be a ballerina this Halloween.*



*Here are a just a few suggestions for treats that in the past have been safe for children with any or all of the top eight food allergies in the country. The items included here are a great place to start, however, please remember to read each and every label before determining if a food is safe:*

## Safe Halloween Treat Ideas

*Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a fool-proof list of safe treats for kids with food allergies. Ingredients and manufacturing methods change from one day to the next and cross-contamination issues are always a concern. But with a few extra steps, you can be on your way to finding at least one or two options that are acceptable for all children to enjoy.*

Bazooka Bubble Gum	Mike and Ikes
Dots	Nerds
Double Bubble Bubble Gum	Original Swedish Fish
Dum Dum Suckers	Pez Candies
Fruit Rollups	Pixie Sticks
Hubba Bubba Bubble Gum	Ring Pops
Juicy Fruit Gum	Skittles
Junior Mints	Smarties
Life Savers Roll Candy	Starburst
Life Savers Gummies	Sweetarts

*When in doubt, try non-food items like stickers, pencils, buttons or bubbles that can be just as fun!*



**Wishing you a safe and happy Halloween!**

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