



Fall Newsletter



NIH Autism Center
of Excellence

2015 Fall

Fall fun

October is National Bullying Prevention Month

Bullying is a serious problem in our schools and communities that can affect all children. It is of particular concern for children with special needs, who are especially vulnerable. Bullying comes in many forms, such as verbal or written abuse, threats, name-calling, statements or gossip; intentionally excluding a person from activities; physical assaults; and cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying is using any form of technology—cell phone communications (texting, calling), computers and the Internet (websites, chat, IM, email, games and social media)—for bullying, knowing that someone would be hurt, embarrassed or upset about it.

Bullying in any form can have harmful effects on a child's education, well-being and safety. For example:

- Students with special needs work very hard to be successful in school. Bullying can affect a student's ability to learn and can lead to school avoidance, changes in grades or behavior, and an inability to concentrate.
- Children who are bullied may have more complaints like stomachaches, headaches and difficulty sleeping, and may feel sad, afraid, angry or bad about themselves.

- Children need to feel safe when they are at school or in the community. Most states have laws to protect children when bullied. Parents have legal rights when their child with a disability is the target of bullying or a form of bullying known as disability harassment, which interferes with the student's ability to benefit from his education.

Family-friendly Halloween fun

Halloween is a holiday full of imaginative fun, being with friends, dressing up and, of course, collecting treats. But for a child who has autism, some Halloween traditions—like wearing a costume, going trick-or-treating or even hearing the doorbell ring repeatedly—may not be fun.

Keep a close watch when trick-or-treating or opening your door to trick-or-treaters. If your child tends to wander or run, these activities may give him easy opportunities to do so. The best way to make the day fun is to find solutions that are right for you and your family. Here are some ideas:

- Instead of an elaborate costume, choose a simple and comfortable alternative. Pick a fun hat or a favorite themed T-shirt or bandana for a no-stress costume. Avoid face painting and masks.
- If your child wants to wear a costume, try it on in advance. Have your child practice wearing the costume a few days before. Bring an easy change of clothes for trick-or-treating or other Halloween activities.



- If your child wants to go trick-or-treating, review the steps with your child, practice at home, and limit the amount of time or homes visited. Fifteen to 30 minutes may be just right for a successful experience.
- Bring along some useful supplies: a flashlight for safety, ear plugs to block out noise and a special toy for comfort. A wagon can be handy for carrying everything, including your child.
- Plan a Halloween party at home with activities that are right for your child. Make simple decorations and healthy snacks or a nutritious potluck dinner.
- Give your child the option to hand out treats to children who come to your door or to not participate at all.

Have a healthy Halloween

Planning for a happy and healthy Halloween benefits everyone in the family. If your child enjoys trying new foods, this is a great time to try new recipes that incorporate fall fruits and vegetables. You can also use seasonal produce such as pumpkins, winter squash and apples to decorate your home.

Trick-or-treating for candy is a highlight for many children. Make sure to monitor for any dietary restrictions or allergies when your child eats candy. Here are some tips for helping your child enjoy the holiday without overindulging:

- Plan with neighbors to hand out healthy pre-packaged snacks, stickers, coupons or other non-food treats.
- Allow your child to pick one piece of candy each day to eat with a snack or after a meal.
- Ask your child to choose her favorite candy to keep, and trade the rest for a small gift, special privileges or time to do something they really enjoy.

Why research?

At Marcus Autism Center, we're committed to providing the best possible care for kids living with autism now and transforming the future of autism through research. Because of that mission, we are always looking for study participants.

To learn more about our research program visit marcus.org/research or call our recruitment coordinators at 404-785-7600.



Visit marcus.org/fall to learn more about fall activities and resources.