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The Teal Pumpkin Project helps children with food allergies celebrate Halloween safely

WE HAVE CANDY & NON-FOOD TREATS!



We support kids with food allergies. Our teal pumpkin means we have non-food treats available!



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#TEALPUMPKINPROJECT

Halloween is celebrated around the world. Yet for millions of children who have food allergies and their families, participating in the holiday can be challenging. Even a tiny amount of candy that children may receive when trick-or-treating or at parties has the potential to cause severe, even life-threatening, reactions in some allergic children. Many Halloween candies contain nuts, milk, soy or wheat, which are some of the most common food allergens. In addition, some miniature or fun-size versions of candies may contain different ingredients than full-sized candy bars and may not have ingredient labels. So it can be difficult for parents to determine whether those candies are safe for children to eat. Children who have food allergies may still go trick-or-treating to have the fun of dressing in costumes and sharing the holiday with friends but cannot enjoy most of the candy they receive because it is not safe for them to eat.

Non-food treats as an alternative to candy

The Teal Pumpkin Project® encourages people to offer non-food treats such as small toys as an alternative to candy for trick-or-treating and at Halloween celebrations to make the holiday more inclusive and help ensure that children with food allergies enjoy a safer, happier holiday. That option can also benefit children who have other health conditions that may prevent them from eating candy, such as food intolerances, eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE), celiac disease, food-protein-induced enterocolitis syndrome (FPIES), use of feeding tubes or restricted diets. The Teal Pumpkin Project is not intended to replace the tradition of giving out candy on Halloween. People may choose to offer children both candy and non-food treats. Also, children who do not have food allergies may enjoy receiving small toys or other fun items they can keep.

Outreach, partners and support

Now in its fifth year, the Teal Pumpkin Project is affiliated with Food Allergy & Research Education (FARE), a leading organization in the United States that works on behalf of people with allergies. The project is also extending beyond the US. It is part of Food Allergy Canada's website and a 2017 article in the *Manchester Evening News* reported that project activities began in Man-

chester, United Kingdom in 2016 and were expected to continue.

The project was inspired by an idea from the Food Allergy Community of East Tennessee, led by support group leader Becky Basalone. She originated the idea to paint a pumpkin teal and place it on a porch to let children with food allergies know they would receive a safe treat at that home. Teal has been the designated color of food allergy awareness for approximately 20 years.

In 2017, as part of its community engagement initiative, FARE sent customized Teal Pumpkin Project kits to 225 elementary schools in underserved neighborhoods in the US, including some in Ann Arbor, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Indianapolis, San Diego and San Francisco. The kits were designed to inform and support students, parents and school personnel who may have had limited access to allergists and food allergy education.

The project's official 2017 partners were Ahold USA (including its brands Stop & Shop, Giant Food and Giant/Martin's), CVS Pharmacy, DBV Technologies, FunWorld, Hy-Vee, Learning Express, Magic Power, Market Street, Mello Smello, Michaels, Savers (doing business as Savers, Value Village, Unique and Village des Valeurs) and SCS Direct. In addition, a variety of companies offer merchandise to raise awareness, such as teal pumpkins, garden flags and pump-

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kin-painting kits, some with a portion of their proceeds donated to support FARE.

How to participate

The Teal Pumpkin Project provides free resources and describes simple steps for participating:

1. Purchase non-food treats

Available at dollar stores, party supply stores, general retailers or online, items can be purchased at low cost, sometimes in bulk, and are often available in Halloween themes or colors. Glow bracelets or necklaces are an example and may be appreciated by parents because they can help make children more visible after nightfall. Other non-food items can be used at home or school long after candy has run out or expired. Examples are:

- Pencils, pens, crayons or markers
- Tiny coloring and puzzle books or stickers
- Novelty toys or finger puppets

Be aware: Some non-food items may contain food allergens so check labels carefully. For example, certain brands of moldable clay include wheat. Choose latex-free items to protect children who have latex allergies. If you provide both types of treats, keep candy and non-food items in separate containers.

2. Display a teal pumpkin

Teal pumpkins can be purchased, as can kits for painting pumpkins a teal color. Some companies sell garden flags that announce non-food treats are available. Or download and print signs from FARE's Teal Pumpkin Project website in the "free resources" section. Signs are available in English, Spanish and French. The website also offers items such as coloring sheets, games and a guide for teaching children about The Teal Pumpkin Project.



3. Add your home or street to the Teal Pumpkin Project map

FARE offers a Teal Pumpkin Project map that allows participants to provide their home address, street or neighborhood. Adding your household to the map shows your support and allows you to connect with other families in your area who are participating.

4. Giving out candy and/or non-food treats

Some children may not feel comfortable explaining they have a food allergy. But there are simple ways to put everyone at ease. You can ask if children if they have a food allergy or offer each visitor their choice of candy or a non-food treat. The FARE website also has signs to help you, including one that says, "You Pick: Candy or Prize."

Safety tips for families

FARE recommends that families managing food allergies consider the following safety tips:

- Enforce a "no eating while trick-or-treating" rule so you have time to review all food labels.
- Avoid candy and treats that do not have ingredients labels.
- Always have an epinephrine auto-injector available, if prescribed.
- Miniature, fun-size or bite-size versions of candy may contain

different ingredients than their full-size counterparts. Make no assumptions. Read all labels carefully.

- A candy that has been safe for your child in the past may now have different ingredients. Read the label every time.
- Keep the emphasis on fun, rather than candy.

Resources

- www.foodallergy.org/education-awareness/teal-pumpkin-project
- <http://foodallergycanada.ca/teal-pumpkin-project>

References

Content for this article was based on and excerpted from:

- www.foodallergy.org/education-awareness/teal-pumpkin-project.
- <http://foodallergycanada.ca/teal-pumpkin-project>
- "Why teal pumpkins are appearing in Manchester again this Halloween." Manchester Evening News. October 18, 2017. www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/teal-pumpkins-halloween-manchester-2017-13774221 (accessed September 4, 2018).