



The WHALE Study  
Family Newsletter  
November | 5<sup>th</sup> | 2021

## Trick or Treat? Give me something good to eat.



Over the last week, many parents have questioned how to manage their children's access to Halloween candy. Answers vary widely. Some medical professionals suggest setting limits based on daily recommendations of sugar intake. However, these recommendations don't take into account the psychological processes behind feeding and eating. In contrast, many nutritionists and psychologists recommend *not worrying about it!* Here's why:

Candy is super exciting around the fun and special time of Halloween - and there will be more fun times with Thanksgiving, Winter Holidays, Valentine's day, etc. Sometimes kids eat too much candy mostly because of its newness, and they don't have access to it otherwise. Kids who are generally restricted from certain foods (e.g. there are "forbidden foods") will eat as much as possible when they get access because they are unsure when they will be offered them again. It's okay if your kids get a stomachache; this will actually help them learn how to listen to their body.

From a psychological perspective, restricting foods actually increases the desire to have them. Instead of restricting offer small amounts often - a few m&m's with lunch frequently can just be a nice lunch & not a wild treat. Think about being shown a red button and told you can't press it. Being told you cannot have or do something makes you want it even more! A study with 7-year-old girls found that if access to snacks was restricted at home, they ate *more* snacks when given the opportunity *and* felt negatively about themselves after. Another study found that girls\* who had high restrictions on food at age 5 were more likely to eat food when they *weren't hungry* from ages 7 to 9. Further, this relationship was stronger for kids who already struggle to control their impulses. Alternatively, **when children (and adults!) are offered sweets without limits regularly, they get bored of them and the sweets lose their excitement over time.**

If you've been reading our newsletters for a while, it may not surprise you that the recommendation for building a healthy relationship with food begins with structure and routines. [See our previous newsletter for suggestions on developing healthy family eating habits, like structuring mealtime.](#) Generally, provide your children with access to high-nutrient foods, but include some low-nutrient foods, the sugary, sweet (perhaps formerly forbidden) snacks, regularly. Regularly offering these foods makes them *less appealing*, and in the long-term, they'll *consume less*. Remember, you are helping your children develop a relationship with food that will last their lifetime -  
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Check out the page below for [anti-diet culture](#) and [community resources](#)!

Click [here](#) to tell us what topics you want covered in future newsletters!



Please reach out if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding The WHALE Study or the COVID-19 situation. Staff can be reached by call, text, or email: [whalestudy@unc.edu](mailto:whalestudy@unc.edu) | 919-914-0588  
Find us on Twitter: [@circlelab\\_unc](https://twitter.com/circlelab_unc), Instagram: [circlelab\\_unc](https://www.instagram.com/circlelab_unc), and [Facebook](#)!  
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beyond when you are responsible for their food. Messages about what foods are bad or scary can interfere with their abilities to focus on how their body feels. This also applies to your own habits, which children are observing.

While research suggests not restricting foods, that does *not* mean there are no limits. Research suggests an indulgent feeding style (allowing any foods at any time) can be equally problematic and result in excess consumption. To find that balance, recall that **you decide what, when, and where food is provided; children decide if and how much they eat.**

*\*Study conducted on non-Hispanic White girls (Fisher & Birch, 2002). The CIRCLE Lab is committed to conducting research that is representative of our communities.*

## REMINDERS

**\*Reminder:** Please refer your friends if they have a 4-6-year-old and you think they would be interested in participating in the WHALE study. For every eligible family that you refer to us, you will receive \$10! Email us at [whalestudy@unc.edu](mailto:whalestudy@unc.edu) or call/text us at 919-914-0588 with their information.\*

## ANTI-DIET CULTURE + COMMUNITY RESOURCES (CLICK BLUE LINKS)

- Read more about the dangers of “diet culture” for children from [Psychology Today](#), [US News](#), and [NYTimes](#).
- More about these feeding recommendations from [HealthLine](#) and [CNN](#)
- Social media on healthy eating and feeding: @anti.diet.kids @kids.eat.in.color @feedinglittles
- Read more [here](#) about limiting children’s access to certain foods and how to do this

### HOUSING

- [Durham Continuum of Care \(CoC\)](#)
- Eviction Information: 216-965-5095
- [Durham Rescue Mission](#)
  - 919-688-9641
- [Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness](#)
- [Urban Ministries of Durham](#)
- [Durham County Social Services](#)
- [Orange County Social Services](#)
- [Wake County Social Services](#)

### FOOD & GROCERIES

- [Wake County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Durham County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Orange County Food Resources](#)
- [Chapel Hill/Carrboro Schools](#)
- [TABLE](#)
- [Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina](#)
- [Wake County Food Resources](#)
- [No Kid Hungry NC](#) - Text FOODNC or COMIDA to 877-877 to receive information about 3 drive-thru or pickup sites with meals for kids closest to you

### HEALTH & SAFETY

- [Compass Center for Women and Families](#)
  - 919-929-7122
- [Durham Crisis Response Center](#)
  - 919-403-9425
- [InterAct Family Safety and Empowerment Center](#)
  - 919-828-7501
- [Orange County Rape Crisis Center](#)
  - 866-935-4783 (call) , 919-504-5211 (text)
- [Freedom House](#)
  - 919-967-8844 (Crisis Unit, Chapel Hill)
  - 1-877-967-8844 (Mobile Service)
- [Suicide prevention lifeline](#): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Hope4NC Helpline: 1-855-587-3463
- [Crisis Text Line](#): Text HOME to 741 741

### CHILDCARE

- [NC Hotline for Critical Workers Seeking Child Care Options](#)
- [Covid Childcare Co-op Creator](#)
- [Covid Urgent Childcare](#)
- [Child Care Services Association](#)

### LEARNING

- [Scholastics Learn at Home](#)
- [Khan Academy](#)
- [PBS Kids](#)
- [CDC Tips for Talking with Children about COVID-19](#)