

How to Avoid Halloween Hangover ; Your Little Super Heroes can Have Fun Without Becoming Monsters the Next Day

By Jane Hersey

What daholiday. But if you think we're talking about too much sugar as the cause of Halloween Hangover, please think again. Sugar certainly can make kids "hyper," but for the majority of children, its effects are not likely to last into the next day and beyond. And forget about the theory that your kids are being difficult simply because they're excited (excitement would also wear off sooner.) So, if it isn't sugar or the festivities that are to blame for your child's November do teachers call "the worst day of the year"? You guessed it - the day after America 's biggest candy 1st hangover, then what is the culprit? Take a close look at the tiny print on those candy wrappers and look for numbers, especially if they also include the names of colors. Do you see things like Yellow #5, Red 40 or Blue No. 2? These are the names for the colorings added to candy and other foods. Synthetic food dyes are the most likely suspects when it comes to triggering behavior problems in children. For decades allergists have reported that food dyes can trigger reactions like hives and swelling in sensitive people. The American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Drugs has found that they can cause respiratory problems. Researchers in the United States , Canada , England and Australia have shown that these dyes can bring about many behavior problems, even when children eat only a small amount.

Here are some of the behaviors that have been attributed to eating food dyes: attention deficits, irritability, restlessness, sleep disturbance, aggression, and hyperactivity. What could possibly be so monstrous about those colorful little confections? It's not like food dyes are new - our grandparents ate artificially colored candies, too. Food dyes have been around for well over 100 years. They were first made from coal tar oil and are now synthesized from petroleum. (The same stuff that makes your car run can result in high-octane kids!) However, in past generations, artificial dyes were a "sometime thing" that children ate occasionally. Back then, most of our food came in a fairly natural form. Many candies were made with natural ingredients like chocolate and pure vanilla (not the fake "vanillin" widely used today). Children were given dyed lollipops only at the bank or the barbershop. They ate candy corn, jelly beans and candy canes once a year, and schools were not in the business of selling soft drinks and junk food. A child growing up in the 1940s and '50s did not start his day with petroleum-based dyes in his toothpaste, medicine, vitamins, imitation juice and cereal. Lunch was not a prepackaged assortment of highly processed, chemically treated crackers, cheese, lunchmeat and dessert. So, when our parents ate candy corn and other dyed candy, they were able to handle it better than our chemically saturated children can today.

Hangover Prevention Hints:

Feed them first. Be sure your kids go out trick-or-treating with full stomachs to discourage snacking en route.

Consider a swap. Some parents keep natural candies on hand and trade for the unnatural ones. Other parents have a highly desired toy on hand to offer in exchange for the stash.

Others tell their young children that if they set their bags of candy outside their door, the Halloween Witch will come by to collect the candy and leave a toy in its place.

Consider a buy-out. Many kids sell their candy back to Mom; it's a big money-maker for them. (My kids continued going trick-or-treating even after they became teenagers. They were a bit embarrassed to be out with the little kids, but the income was so good they hated to give it up.)

Limit the damage. If you and your child go through the stash and toss out the most brightly colored candies, and eat only a limited number per day, you will probably be able to weather the event.

Consider giving out balloons or trinkets (that are too big to swallow) to the trick-or-treaters who come to your home.

Here are some natural candies: Pearson's Mints and Goldenberg's Chews (available at many Wal-Mart stores), Valomilk Cups (sold at Cracker Barrel restaurants), Ghirardelli Dark Chocolate Squares with White Mint Filling (found at Kmart, Target and Wal-Mart), Mary Jane Peanut Butter Kisses, and Canel's Milk Lollipops.

Visit a health food store or healthy market (Whole Foods, Wild Oats) for delicious natural options. Halloween doesn't have to be a horror. Avoid the petroleum dyes and try not to let the kids overdo the sweets or eat them on an empty stomach. And do what many parents do: keep the candies out of sight (and out of mind), toss out a few each day, and try not to eat too many of them yourself! You will probably find that Halloween is a fun holiday again! Since 1976, the nonprofit Feingold Association has shown families how to find their favorite food.