



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 27, 2009

Contact: Rob Schweers

Phone: 515-248-5683

E-mail: schweersr@wellmark.com

Give kids a treat: Trim the Halloween loot *Culture of excess contributes to childhood obesity*

DES MOINES, IA (October 27, 2009) – Not that long ago, trick-or-treating meant getting one small piece of candy at each door.

Times have changed.

Today, it's not uncommon to receive two or three pieces of candy, and sometimes even a handful. That's when the treat becomes a trick.

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, nearly a third of American kids – 23 million children and teenagers – are overweight or obese. Childhood obesity threatens to reverse the gains in life expectancy we have achieved over the last two centuries. In fact, due to obesity, today's children are expected to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

Childhood obesity also carries a hefty price tag, accounting for \$14 billion each year in health care costs.

Does Halloween cause childhood obesity? Of course not. The condition is caused by a variety of genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors. But through our handouts at the door, we encourage kids to eat more candy than they should. And the results speak for themselves.

This year, however, why not buy only enough candy to give each child one piece. It's a small, but tangible (and cheaper) way to make a difference in the fight against childhood obesity.

Rationing kids' candy after Halloween is another important consideration for parents. A few tips for effective candy management:

- Don't buy candy too early, and avoid your favorite brands. For many of us, the temptation can be too great.
- Try to make the candy last as long as possible, limiting kids' intake to one or two pieces per day.

- Keep the candy out of sight, and don't be afraid to throw the rest out when it gets old.
- Avoid sending candy to school in kids' lunch bags. A "sugar high" followed by a crash isn't good for the kids (or the teachers!).
- Be aware of your own eating habits. Eating two full-size candy bars a day for one week equals an extra pound on the scale.

Visit www.wellmark.com for more information on wellness resources, preventive care and healthy living.

-30-

Wellmark, Inc. (www.wellmark.com) does business as Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa. Wellmark and its subsidiaries and affiliated companies, including Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota and Wellmark Health Plan of Iowa, Inc., insure or pay health benefit claims for more than two million members in Iowa and South Dakota. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota, and Wellmark Health Plan of Iowa, Inc. are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.