



Trick yourself to stop binging on treats

With Halloween coming up, I need to figure out how to avoid binging on candy. Any ideas?

For anyone interested in maintaining healthful eating habits, the fat and calories in candy can be the scariest thing about this holiday.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Americans on average consumed 26 pounds of candy in 2006, with a good portion of that total occurring around Halloween.

The problem doesn't lie in one mini-size candy bar, of course. Rather, it's in the omnipresence of the sweet stuff. Grocery aisles are overflowing with a wider variety of candies than any other time of year. Candy jars that are usually stored away are dusted off and filled up to appear on office desks. Then, just when you think it's safe, leftover trick-or-treat sweets make their annual ghastly appearance in the common area at your worksite.

For most people, it takes more than willpower to avoid overindulging at this time of year. It takes focus, concentration, motivation — and the ability to be honest with yourself.

Despite such a dark depiction of this sugar-laden time of year, it's not necessary to demonize sweets. Honest! For instance, a 1998 study from the Harvard School of Public Health linked modest candy consumption ("modest" means one to three times a month) with greater longevity. And many studies have linked the flavonoids in small amounts of dark chocolate (up to about 1.5 ounces a day) with heart-healthy benefits,

including lower blood pressure and reduced risk to arteries.

But all of these studies warn against overindulging. And research indicates it's easy to fool yourself about that sort of thing. In fact, a report in the January 2006 issue of *International Journal of Obesity* noted that not only did the visibility and proximity of an office candy dish help increase candy consumption, but that people tended to underestimate how much of that candy they actually ate.

So, what can you do?

First, be honest with yourself. If you fear binging, it's not a bad idea to jot down on a piece of paper every time you indulge in a piece of candy. You may be surprised at how much candy you're tempted to put in your mouth — and you may find yourself having second thoughts as you reach for your pencil before you reach for the candy dish.

Second, keep healthful treats visible and reachable. Fill up on apples, baby carrots and grapes, and you'll be better able to control that sweet tooth.

Finally, don't completely deprive yourself. But make it count: Don't just reach for a sweet because it's right in front of you. Choose a small piece of dark chocolate, or a bit of a special, favorite treat you don't let yourself normally enjoy. The key, of course, is "everything in moderation."

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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By Martha Filipic

(614) 292-9833

filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Jaime Foster, registered dietitian and program specialist for Ohio State University Extension in the Department of Human Nutrition, College of Education and Human Ecology.

To receive Chow Line by e-mail, send a message to filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu or sign up at <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~news/subscribe.php>.

Section of Communications
and Technology
News and Media Relations
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
(330) 263-3780

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