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Tricks for choosing smart treats this Halloween

By Angelica Richie

Even if you're officially too cool to go trick-or-treating on Halloween, you're bound to find yourself in the middle of an onslaught of sweet and festive treats this weekend. Between class parties, bake sales and seasonal specials, getting a taste for autumn is easy. Making choices that support your athletic goals can be hard.

[Becci Twombly](#), a dietician for UCLA Athletics, and [Mary Ellen Bingham](#), a sports nutritionist at North Carolina, explain what happens when you splurge on sweets, and how to keep them from damaging your athletic performance.

First things first: When it comes to sugary seasonal snacks, small bites are better than handfuls.

"Your body can only process so many calories at one time," Twombly says. "If you overindulge, you've created a traffic jam for your body to metabolize."

So when you get to practice, your body may not be able to keep up.

"If you're working on a specific skill," Twombly says, "your muscle memory is not going to be as solid as it would be if you had been well-fueled."

But that's not the scary part

"Unless you're trying to balance your weight, it's not so much about what you are eating, it's what you're not eating," Twombly says. "By the time you get to your practice, unless you've eaten your 'always' foods also, you're going to be out of energy."

Bingham says those staples are key, even on holidays.

"Establish a healthy base of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and low-fat dairy or dairy alternatives," she says. "And then you can allow for treats such as desserts or candy."

For Halloween in particular, it's easy to have an "it's just one day" mentality, but it's important to consider what you need to do tomorrow, which will definitely be affected.

"Everybody has a calorie budget that they need to stay within," Twombly says. "On those days, 80 percent of things you eat need to be functional if you're trying to be an athlete, but 20 percent can be whatever you want. For typical days, 90/10 is a better goal, but the key is to consider your training."

Remember when making choices, not all candies are created equal.

Some treats: Red Vines, chocolate-covered almonds and raisins, York Peppermint Patties, lollipops, tootsie pops and baked chips

Some tricks: Starburst and Skittles, Butterfingers and Snickers

“Look at what’s underneath it.” Twombly says of choosing your chocolates. “Anything that has nugget or caramel is going to have a lot more saturated fats than something that doesn’t.”

Bingham’s secret is in the portions.

“For chocolate candy or gummies, opt for the small ‘snack size’ portion instead of the full-sized candy,” she says.

For favorites like apple cider, Twombly says there’s room.

“It can be functional as long as those carbs are figured into your total diet,” she says.

And Bingham goes so far as to recommend a pumpkin latte or one of its coffee cousins. With one warning.

“Treat yourself to these fall drinks once in a while,” Bingham says. “But opt for size small, low-fat milk.

“And skip the whipped cream.”
