

Dr. Nancy: Hi, good afternoon. It's Live with Dr. Nancy. Today, I have a, you're a health coach, right, Ashley?

Ashley Parsons: A health coach.

Dr. Nancy: Yeah, she's a health coach. She works with her husband at Stepping Stone Healthcare in Indianapolis. And we had him on earlier when we started doing our broadcast. So, she's gonna come talk to us today about Halloween treats. And before she does, I'm gonna show you this, if you can see. Okay, these are things you should not be eating. I was telling her, these are for counting, not for eating. But anyway, if you have not entered a number, how many pumpkins you think are in here, go ahead and enter that. You can do it below in the comment section, or somewhere on our page we have a flyer about it. You can comment there. So, whoever guesses the right amount of pumpkins are gonna win a family zoo membership, and also a little cute unicorn, just something for the kids, because kids like to win things, too.

Dr. Nancy: So, Ashley's gonna talk to us today about some healthy alternatives to Halloween treats. And if you like what we say, go ahead and share it with your friends. And if you want to comment below, ask any questions, we'll be happy to answer them. So, I'm gonna let Ashley go ahead and take it away.

Ashley Parsons: Thanks, Nancy.

Dr. Nancy: You're welcome.

Ashley Parsons: Thanks so much for inviting me. So, I also thought that I would talk about healthy lunch boxes [crosstalk 00:01:32]

Dr. Nancy: Oh, great.

Ashley Parsons: What to do with all that Halloween candy that's gonna be coming up next week. So, I thought first, that I would go into a little bit about how I became a health coach and how you actually, helped my daughter regain her health a couple years back. About 10 to 12 years ago, I really started struggling with my own health. And my symptoms got so bad that I couldn't recall words sometimes. I had constant brain fog and fatigue, awful insomnia and anxiety.

Ashley Parsons: And it took me years to figure out what was going on. And I actually diagnosed myself. I learned that I was dealing with something called candidiasis, which you might, I'm sure you know that what that is. But if people don't, it's an overgrowth of systemic candida, which is a fungus that we all have in our body. It took me a couple months to put on my brave pants and do the Candida cleanse, but I did. I restricted my foods and I took some supplements. And just by eliminating sugar, and gluten, and dairy, I was feeling so much better after a month. And by three months, I was pretty much myself again. And I was

amazed. I couldn't believe that just by changing what I was eating, that I could heal myself. And so, I really wanted to share this with other people. And that's what took me down the health coaching route.

Ashley Parsons: At the same time, when I was struggling with my own health, my daughter was about a year at this point. And she was battling chronic ear infections. It got to the point that she developed an allergy to amoxicillin. And the doctor finally said that they wanted to put tubes in her ears. And at that point, I just wanted to pause, because I knew, before I was a health coach, I ran a massage practice in Chicago for about 10 years. And I knew that the chiropractor that I was working with did adjustments for ear infections. And so, a long story short, we found your practice in Carmel. And after, I think it was two to three adjustments and taking my daughter off of dairy, she didn't have another ear infection. And that was mind blowing to me.

Dr. Nancy: Thank you for saying that. Because I tell a lot of moms to take their kids off dairy, and they're like, "Oh, no."

Ashley Parsons: It's hard at first. My daughter actually can do goat products. So, we do goat cheese, we do goat cheese pizza. I've actually, since then, she's still dairy-free and I've taken her off gluten, too. And I cannot tell you how much less moody she is, and how much more in check her anxiety levels are. It's kind of mind blowing. She actually accidentally ate a pretzel one day, and the next day woke up with stomachaches and was an emotional wreck. And I was, "Wow, that's very significant."

Dr. Nancy: Yeah.

Ashley Parsons: So, that's a little bit about my background and how I became a health coach. Before I get into talking about lunchboxes and Halloween candy, I just want to comment on how feeding our kiddos is very personal, and it can be a very sensitive topic. There's a lot of information about food out there, and some of it can be very contradictory, which is frustrating. It frustrates me. So, sometimes when we learn new information about food, it kind of makes us feel bad about what our current habits are, how we're feeding our family.

Ashley Parsons: The information that I'm providing is by no means meant to come off as judgmental or shaming. We're all on their own unique health journey, and what works for me doesn't necessarily work for other people. So, just keep that in mind when I'm going through my tips. Also, I have a Facebook group called Good, Better, Best Eats. And the title comes from a way of looking at our food that helps remove some of the guilt and shame.

Ashley Parsons: Basically, each food that we eat can be put into one of these categories of good, better, best. And so, on a daily basis, I strive for creating a balance. So, if my breakfast falls more in the good category, then lunch and dinner, I try to strive

for better and best. When I'm working with my clients, I recommend that they shoot for nutrient-dense foods like 80 to 90% of the time, and then let loose 10% of the time. Have fun. I really think it's important to create guilt-free splurging.

Dr. Nancy: That's a great idea.

Ashley Parsons: Yeah. And also for our kiddos. 80 to 90% of the time is great for them.

Dr. Nancy: Yeah.

Ashley Parsons: It's more about adding in healthy stuff versus the restricting ourselves. So, I don't know about you, I hate being told no. And it doesn't matter if it's me doing it.

Dr. Nancy: Exactly. Great.

Ashley Parsons: All right. So, let's tackle the lunchbox first. I have five tips that I'm gonna go through, and then I'll recap them. The first one's very much in align with what I was just talking about, which is focusing on real nutrient-rich foods. And I like to say avoid the CRAP, which is carbonated, refined, artificial, and processed foods. I refer to these foods as food-like substances, or FLS.

Ashley Parsons: Food-like substances do not fit on the good, better, best spectrum. They tend to be really high in sugar, high in salts, and saturated fats. They're also high in calories, and tend to be very low in nutrients. So, this is very much in alignment with clean eating, or JERF. I don't know if you've heard of that, but just eat real food.

Ashley Parsons: So, reading labels can be super helpful. I like to say that when you're reading the label if there's an ingredient on there that you wouldn't purchase to cook with yourself, it's probably not clean. And so, that would be like maltodextrin, or monosodium glutamate. And usually, the healthiest foods don't have labels, so, fruits and veggies don't have labels, right? So, that's kind of an easy rule of thumb.

Ashley Parsons: The next tip that I like to focus on is including a healthy protein, a healthy fat, a fruit and veggie in every meal. So, if your family eats meat, shoot for organic, pasture raised chicken or grass fed beef. And then, tofu, beans, nuts, seeds, guacamole. They're all great sources for healthy proteins and fats.

Ashley Parsons: The next tip that I have is all about veggies, and it's shooting for a rainbow. So, different fruits and vegetables, different colored fruits and vegetables have different phytonutrients. And they have some amazing health benefits, like boosting your immune system. They can also detoxify your body. They help fight

cancer. So, my suggestion there is to try to eat 4 to 5 different colored fruits and vegetables on a daily basis. Beans count, Skittles don't.

Dr. Nancy: Skittles don't.

Ashley Parsons: Skittles don't. Eat the rainbow, not the Skittles. So, yeah. And then, my fourth tip, I like to have parents keep an eye on sugar levels. So, even natural sugar, the daily recommended amount of added sugar for a child is less than 6 teaspoons. I made a little baggie, here, to show kind of how much that is. So, that's your daily amount. One mini yogurt can have 18 to 20 grams, so almost your daily amount in just a mini yogurt.

Ashley Parsons: So, it's amazing how many products actually hide sugars, tomato sauces, salad dressings, peanut butter, cereal bars, dried fruit. So again, reading those labels can be really eye-opening. Research is actually showing that sugar is a bigger influencer on heart disease than fat and salt these days. And it can also suppress your immune system for up to five hours after eating it. I have always noticed with my kids, our sick season starts right at Halloween.

Dr. Nancy: Oh, yes. That's true.

Ashley Parsons: So, yeah. Just think about that. Make that connection with the candy.

Dr. Nancy: That's great.

Ashley Parsons: So, yeah, be mindful of what they are drinking. Juice is basically, equivalent to soda, as far as calories. And since the fiber's stripped out of it, it has the same blood sugar level effect as soda. I have an alternative, which can be fun. It does still have a little fruit juice in it. But it's called, can you see that?

Dr. Nancy: I see that, yeah.

Ashley Parsons: Okay, Mamma Chia. And so, they are Chia squeezes. This one has spirulina and chlorella, which are great greens for the body. And it also has fruit purée, so it still has the fiber. So, Chia seeds are really good at detoxing the body. So, your kids are still getting the fun stuff, but with some nutrients added. I can find that at Target. You can get it online at Amazon.

Dr. Nancy: What's it called, Mamma Mia?

Ashley Parsons: It's just, I always call it Mamma Mia, but it's Mamma Chia.

Dr. Nancy: Mamma Chia.

Ashley Parsons: Mamma Chia Seed Your Soul.

Dr. Nancy: Okay.

Ashley Parsons: I love Chia seeds, they're fun. It's also important to remember that white flour, like pretzels and bagels, affect your body the same way a piece of candy does. So, it just spikes that blood sugar level.

Dr. Nancy: Great.

Ashley Parsons: Fifth tip is just aim for organic and non-GMO when you can. The Environmental Working Group provides an updated Dirty Dozen and Clean Fifteen list annually. And that's a great resource to figure out which produce to buy, organically. Strawberries and apples tend to be the worst. Strawberries are like sponges for pesticides. Apples have been found to have up to 40 pesticides on one apple. So, if there's two to get, those are the two.

Ashley Parsons: There's been many studies showing that when an organic diet is introduced into a group of children that usually eat conventional food, that the concentration of pesticide in their urine drops to undetectable levels within just days of consuming an organic diet. And it goes right back up when they reintroduce the conventional foods. So, that's pretty gross and amazing.

Dr. Nancy: That is true.

Ashley Parsons: Yeah. So, just to recap really quickly, the five tips are, focus on real nutrient-rich foods, eating a rainbow daily, try to include a healthy protein, healthy fat, and fruit and veggie in each meal, watch the sugar levels, and then shoot for organic and non-GMO. So, those are my five simple tips. Speaking of the sugar side of things, the Halloween candy. So next, I think a week from today, we have Halloween.

Ashley Parsons: Some of my tips for the day of is one, try to feed the kiddos a healthy meal before you go trick-or-treating, so they're not as inclined to gorge on the candy. And that might be their day of splurging a little bit. And then, maybe establish and communicate to your kiddos the limits for the days to follow. What I tend to do with my family is, I give them a Ziploc bag and let them put their favorite pieces of candy in that. And then, whenever we have left, there are places, there's a couple of dental offices, I know Indy Dental Health and Kool Smiles will buy the extra candy back. So, your kids will get a little bit of money. Another awesome program is called Operation Gratitude. And you can donate your excess candy to soldiers. And so, there's some drop-off sites. You can Google that and find where's a local drop-off site near you. Or the garbage.

Dr. Nancy: Yeah.

Ashley Parsons: It's okay. Let it go.

Dr. Nancy: That's right.

Ashley Parsons: At your house, try to offer alternatives to candy, like maybe fake teeth, or tattoos, pencils, fun erasers. The kiddos might groan a little bit, but the parents will thank you, for sure.

Dr. Nancy: Yep.

Ashley Parsons: And then, if you're gonna stick with candy, try to support some of the healthier brands. There's Justin's, there's Young Earth, Wholesome, SmartSweets, and even Annie's. Amazon sells xylitol lollipops. And some of those other brands, you can find at Whole Foods and Fresh Thyme.

Dr. Nancy: Right.

Ashley Parsons: Taking out some of the chemicals that are added in.

Dr. Nancy: Yeah.

Ashley Parsons: And finally, just be a good role model for your kids, and eat candy in moderation, yourself.

Dr. Nancy: That's where I have a problem.

Ashley Parsons: I know, that's why I like to throw it away.

Dr. Nancy: Yeah.

Ashley Parsons: I'm like, "Just get it out." So, I don't know, I was gonna offer some suggestions on lunchbox ideas. I know we're a couple months into school, and I get in food rut. So, I thought I'd just kind of jot down some ideas, if you think we have time for that.

Dr. Nancy: No, that'd be great. I know our parents appreciate that.

Ashley Parsons: Yeah. So, one of the things we love to do is build-your-own tacos, just like Chipotle. So, brown rice, tomatoes, lettuce, guacamole, beans, shredded chicken, if your kids prefer that. And letting them get hands-on. My daughter just loves to kind of build her own stuff, and feel like she has some say-so in the matter. Another thing we go to often is a homemade vegetable soup. And again, just trying to include the rainbow. I might do garlic toast squares on the side. And since she's gluten-free, we use Native bread, which is a bread that's made locally here. You can get it at Good Earth. It is mind blowing. You would not even know it was gluten-free. They have sourdough, they have honey wheat. It's amazing. And then you're supporting local, too, so that's awesome.

Dr. Nancy: Yes.

Ashley Parsons: We also often, do a rainbow veggie, we do gluten-free pasta. You could do a whole grain pasta. And on the side, we might do a hard-boiled egg with that. Fried brown rice with again, a rainbow of veggies. Sometimes I'll stir organic edamame on the side of that. She loves to pop those little pods. And then another go-to is a Greek salad. We'll have diced chicken, hummus, and veggies for dipping. Sometimes we'll do a nitrate-free turkey roll. So, you just roll it up. And we'll serve that with mini cucumber slices. I also have, so, Tessamae is an awesome, this is a dairy-free ranch dressing. This one happens to be avocado, but they have a plain ranch, too. And it's dairy-free. It is clean. It is paleo-friendly. Awesome brand.

Dr. Nancy: Where do you get that?

Ashley Parsons: That's Fresh Thyme, Kroger's has it.

Dr. Nancy: Okay.

Ashley Parsons: I would think maybe, even Target. It tends to be in the cooler by the salads. It's not chill stable.

Dr. Nancy: Oh, okay.

Ashley Parsons: So, that's another awesome one. And then, another go-to is homemade meatballs and maybe, cooked peas, or green beans, if your kiddos will eat that.

Dr. Nancy: Good.

Ashley Parsons: Those are some of my suggestions. I hope that helps.

Dr. Nancy: Your tacos that you make, do you do it with corn tortillas, then?

Ashley Parsons: With the build-your-own, sometimes I'll do corn tortillas, or just like at Chipotle, we'll do burrito bowls. So, it'll be lettuce, rice, meat. It just depends. So, yeah, with Sophie, we do the corn tortillas, though. She has fun with that. Or even just like a, sometimes they have those quinoa tortilla chips, when they can just actually scoop. And again, I use goat cheese for her, so she can feel like she's having a little bit of dairy, there.

Dr. Nancy: Yeah. Ashley, that was wonderful. All great tips.

Ashley Parsons: Yeah, good. I was gonna say, anybody who's listening, feel free to join Good, Better, Best Eats. I provide clean recipe ideas there, and also healthy articles. So,

if you have any questions from this talk, I can answer them there. Just post them in the group.

Dr. Nancy: Great. Well, thank you. We really appreciate you coming on and talking to us about healthy eating. Great, great tips for the families, I'm sure. Anything else you want to leave us with before we leave?

Ashley Parsons: I don't think so.

Dr. Nancy: Okay.

Ashley Parsons: Just have a happy, safe Halloween. And yeah, chuck the excess.

Dr. Nancy: Awesome.

Ashley Parsons: Okay, thanks.

Dr. Nancy: Thanks, Ashley. And again, you're at steppingstoneindy.com.

Ashley Parsons: Yeah.

Dr. Nancy: Where her husband and her work with more holistic, functional medicine-type-

Ashley Parsons: Yeah, I love to help families try to include a little bit more nutrition into their daily habits, and create quick, simple ideas for families. So, yeah, absolutely. Reach out.

Dr. Nancy: Great. Thank you, again, Ashley, for coming on.

Ashley Parsons: Thank you. Take care.

Dr. Nancy: Bye.

Ashley Parsons: Bye-bye.