

Special Report: *Halloween Safety Tips*

Halloween is a fun and exciting time for children and adults alike. It's also a time when accidents and tragedies abound.

The following is a list of things you can do to ensure that your loved ones have a safe and fun Halloween.

Costumes

- Flame resistance. When picking out a costume for your child, always be sure to look for ones with a "flame resistant" label. Make certain every piece of the costume, wigs, beards, hats, scarves, masks is marked as "flame resistant". Flame resistant items can catch fire, but resist burning and are easily extinguished once removed from the fire's source.
- Avoid loose, billowy and baggy costumes. Jack-o-lanterns and candles are a big part of Halloween decorations and pose a great risk to anyone wearing a costume that is loose, billowy or baggy.
- Costumes should be short enough to not trip your child.
- Bright material. Be sure your child's costume is light or brightly colored so it can be easily seen in the dark. If your child has a dark costume, add strips of reflective tape so motorists can easily see him. Reflective tape can be found in most hardware or sporting goods stores and is an easy way to make sure your child is visible.
- Secure scarves and hats. Not only do scarves and hats present a potential fire hazard when not secured, they can also obstruct vision. It is very important that children can see clearly as they are out trick-or-treating so be sure to secure scarves, hats or any other item that may obstruct their vision.
- Face paint or makeup instead of masks. Masks should be avoided for the same reason; they are often designed so that the wearer cannot see well out of them. A safer alternative is to use makeup or face paint instead. If your child's costume just won't work without a mask, be sure to get one that fits your child well and that the eye holes are big enough that the child can see clearly with it on.
- Safe shoes. Wearing mother's stilettos may be a cute addition to a costume but presents a tripping hazard. Be sure your child's shoes allow her to walk easily and safely and that they won't cause her to trip or stumble as she's crossing the street.

- Soft, flexible props. Make sure any sword, wands, scythes, etc., that are a part of your child's costume is soft and flexible to avoid injury.

Trick-or-Treating

- Young children should always be accompanied by an adult or responsible teenager.

- Stick to familiar neighborhoods. Older children who are going out without a parent should stay in your neighborhood for safety.

- Never let a child, no matter what their age, trick-or-treat alone. There is safety in numbers, especially when going from door-to-door in the dark.

- Map out a route of exactly where your trick-or-treaters will be going and insist that they stick to it at all times.

- Trick-or-treat only at houses that are well lit or that have a porch light on to welcome trick-or-treaters. Never go to a dark house or one where a "no trick-or-treating" sign is displayed.

- Make certain to tell your children, no matter what their age, that they are not to enter someone's house or apartment. And, that they are not to help an adult with anything, no matter what he or she says. If the adult truly needs help he can get another adult to help him.

- Always walk on sidewalks and use cross walks or cross at street corners. Trick-or-treaters have been run over when darting out from between parked cars.

- Make sure your children know they are never to go down an alley or cut through an empty lot or field. They should stick to the preplanned route at all times.

- In order to see and to be seen everyone in the group should carry a flashlight.

- Tell your children they are not to eat anything until they get home and have an adult check their goodies. If your children eat a good meal before they go they may be less tempted to dive into their goody bag before you get a chance to check it out.

Parties

- Remove harmful and/or breakable objects from the party area. This includes candles or any open flames that could potentially cause costumes to catch fire.

- If using dry ice in the punch, place small chunks in a bowl of water and float the bowl in the punch. Dry ice contains chemicals that should not be ingested and can also cause burns if pieces find their way in your guests' mouths.

- Check to be sure that none of your guests have food allergies before you plan your menu. Food allergies are more common now than ever and a bad reaction can put a damper on your festivities, as well as possibly risking the health of a guest.

- Play games that are age appropriate to your group. If there are a variety of ages in your group, consider breaking into smaller groups according to age and playing games accordingly.

- Avoid germ-swapping games to keep health risks at bay. While bobbing for apples and similar games are fun and traditional, they are also breeding grounds for all sorts of germs.

Pets

- Keep pets inside. Halloween is a dangerous time for pets. Keeping them inside and accompanying them when they're put out to "do their business" will help keep them safe from harm. If you have pets that absolutely have to be outside, keep them in a well lit place where you can see them.

- If you have a pet that might dart out the door when it's opened for trick-or-treators, consider shutting it in a room with food and water and checking on it periodically through the evening.

- Consider using artificial lights in place of candles for decorating. Many a tail, paw and face have been burned due to traditional candles.

- Keep all candy and wrappers out of your pets' reach.

- If you're hosting an adult party where alcohol will be served, be sure to keep it well out of your pets' reach. While an intoxicated pooch may be humorous, a visit to the vet's office will not.