

# Halloween Safety Tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics

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Halloween is an exciting time of year for kids, and to help them have a safe holiday, here are some tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Feel free to excerpt these tips or use them in their entirety for any print or broadcast story, with acknowledgment of source.

## **ALL DRESSED UP:**

- Plan costumes that are bright and reflective. Make sure that shoes fit well and that costumes are short enough to prevent tripping, entanglement or contact with flame.
- Consider adding reflective tape or striping to costumes and trick-or-treat bags for greater visibility.
- Because masks can limit or block eyesight, consider non-toxic makeup and decorative hats as safer alternatives. Hats should fit properly so they don't slide over eyes. Makeup should be tested ahead of time on a small patch of skin to make sure there are no unpleasant surprises on the big day.
- When shopping for costumes, wigs and accessories, look for and purchase those with a label clearly indicating they are flame resistant.
- If a sword, cane, or stick is a part of your child's costume, make sure it is not sharp or long. A child may be easily hurt by these accessories if he stumbles or trips.
- Do not use decorative contact lenses. While the packaging on decorative lenses will often make claims such as "one size fits all," or "no need to see an eye specialist," using decorative contact lenses without a prescription is both dangerous and illegal. This can cause pain, inflammation, and serious eye disorders and infections, which may lead to permanent vision loss.
- Review with children how to call 9-1-1 (or their local emergency number) if they ever have an emergency or become lost.

## **CARVING A NICHE:**

- Small children should never carve pumpkins. Children can draw a face with markers. Then parents can do the cutting.
- Consider using a flashlight or glow stick instead of a candle to light your pumpkin. If you do use a candle, a votive candle is safest.
- Candlelit pumpkins should be placed on a sturdy table, away from curtains and other flammable objects, and not on a porch or any path where visitors may pass close by. They should never be left unattended.

## **HOME SAFE HOME:**

- To keep homes safe for visiting trick-or-treaters, parents should remove from the porch and front yard anything a child could trip over such as garden hoses, toys, bikes and lawn decorations.
- Parents should check outdoor lights and replace burned-out bulbs.
- Wet leaves or snow should be swept from sidewalks and steps.
- Restrain pets so they do not inadvertently jump on or bite a trick-or-treater or run away.

## **ON THE TRICK-OR-TREAT TRAIL:**

- A parent or responsible adult should always accompany young children on their neighborhood rounds.
- Have flashlights with fresh batteries for all children and their escorts.

- If your older children are going alone, plan and review the route that is acceptable to you. Agree on a specific time when they should return home.
- Only go to homes with a porch light on and never enter a home or car for a treat.
- Because pedestrian injuries are the most common injuries to children on Halloween, remind Trick-or-Treaters:
  - Stay in a group and communicate where they will be going.
  - Remember reflective tape for costumes and trick-or-treat bags.
  - Carry a cellphone for quick communication.
  - Remain on well-lit streets and always use the sidewalk.
  - If no sidewalk is available, walk at the far edge of the roadway facing traffic.
  - Never cut across yards or use alleys.
  - Only cross the street as a group in established crosswalks (as recognized by local custom). Never cross between parked cars or out of driveways.
  - Don't assume the right of way. Motorists may have trouble seeing Trick-or-Treaters. Just because one car stops, doesn't mean others will!
- Law enforcement authorities should be notified immediately of any suspicious or unlawful activity.

**HEALTHY HALLOWEEN:**

- A good meal prior to parties and trick-or-treating will discourage youngsters from filling up on Halloween treats.
- Consider purchasing non-food treats for those who visit your home, such as coloring books or pens and pencils.
- Wait until children are home to sort and check treats. Though tampering is rare, a responsible adult should closely examine all treats and throw away any spoiled, unwrapped or suspicious items.
- Try to ration treats for the days and weeks following Halloween.

**HALLOWEEN AND FOOD ALLERGIES:**

- Halloween can be tricky for children with food allergies. It's important that parents closely examine Halloween candy to avoid a potentially life-threatening reaction:
  - Always read the ingredient label on treats. Many popular Halloween candies contain some of the most common allergens, such as peanuts or tree nuts, milk, egg, soy or wheat.
  - If the ingredients aren't listed, arrange for a treat "exchange" with classmates or friends. Or, bag up the goodies your child can't eat because of an allergy and leave them with a note asking the "Treat Fairy" to swap them for a prize.
  - Be aware that even if they are not listed on the ingredient label, candy is at high risk of containing trace amounts of common allergy triggers, because factories often produce many different products. Also, "fun size" or miniature candies may have different ingredients or be made on different equipment than the regular size candies, meaning that brands your child previously ate without problems could cause a reaction.
  - Teach your child to politely turn down home-baked items such as cupcakes and brownies, and never to taste or share another child's food.