

Safety Tips for Halloween

Halloween is a magical time for children, but every year the holiday is marred by accidents. These safety tips will help keep your children safe.

- **Establish a route** for the children to take, in a known neighborhood. Tell them to use flashlights if they go out after dusk, stay on sidewalks, avoid crossing yards, and cross streets at the corner. Warn them not to dash between parked cars. Children should stop at all corners and stay together in a group before crossing the street. They should go only to well-lit houses and remain on the porch rather than going inside.
- **Young children** should be accompanied by an adult. They should have their names and addresses on their costumes, and know their phone number. Children old enough to go out alone should have a curfew.
- **Masks** can obstruct vision and hearing. Try to talk your child out of wearing one, and if that's not possible, make sure eye and ear holes are sufficiently large. Face paint is a good substitute, but it should be nontoxic and hypoallergenic.
- **Costumes** should be flame-retardant, fit properly, and be marked with reflective tape. Avoid oversized shoes, high heels, trailing skirts or pants that your child could trip on and floppy hats than might obscure vision. If a knife or sword is part of the costume, these toy weapons should be flexible, not rigid or sharp.
- **Small children should not carve pumpkins.** They can be allowed to draw a face on the pumpkin with markers, and then let you do the cutting. Children over 5 can carve their own jack o'lanterns, using special pumpkin cutters that come with safety bars.
- **If you light the jack o'lantern** with a candle, votive candles are safest. Place lighted pumpkins on a sturdy table, away from the door and from curtains and other flammable objects. Never leave them unattended. There are now very realistic battery candles that are a much safer alternative to candles.
- **Tell children to bring all their treats home**, so you can check them out. Inspect the treats to make sure wrappers are intact and there is no sign of damage. Look for small items like gum, peanuts, hard candy, or small toys that pose a choking hazard for younger children.
- **To keep your home safe** for visiting trick-or-treaters, remove any hazard. Clear the yard of garden hoses, toys, bikes, and lawn decorations a child could trip over. Make sure the entrance is well-lit, replace any burnedout bulbs, and sweep wet leaves from sidewalks and steps.
- **If you're out in a car** on Halloween, drive slowly, watch for children, and exit driveways with care.

Just a final suggestion: Trick or Treating is problematic. Why not instead host a Halloween Party for your children and friends? Then you can control the activities and food and enjoy your children!

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics, US Consumer Products Safety Commission, and the National SAFE KIDS Campaign.