

# Making Halloween Safe, Not Scary

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According to the National Safety Council, roughly four times as many children aged 5-14 are killed while walking on Halloween evening compared with other evenings of the year. Falls are the leading cause of injuries among children on Halloween. Many Halloween-related injuries can be prevented if parents closely supervise school-aged children during trick-or-treat activities.

Halloween is a favorite of many children and adults alike. It's a time for scary fun and good-natured pranks. However, it's important to make sure all activities stay within the bounds of safety.

Nothing can ruin a good time for the ghosts or goblins faster than an accident or someone getting hurt. Parents and adults can help prevent children from getting injured by following simple common sense rules that can make all the difference.

## **TIPS FOR PARENTS:**

Halloween may be a fun holiday for kids, but for parents, trick-or-treat time can be a little troublesome. Concerns about children's safety – whether they are out in the neighborhood or back at home with their bags of goodies – can cast a spell on the evening's festivity. But not to worry! Following a few safety tips will ensure that Halloween can be safe and not scary.

## **"UNHAUNTING" YOUR HOUSE AND NEIGHBORHOOD:**

- Welcome trick-or-treaters at home by turning on your exterior lights.
- Remove objects from your yard that might present a hazard to visitors.
- Ask you Neighborhood Watch or citizen's group to patrol the community.
- Involve students from a local college or university to be "witch's helpers." These students help trick-or-treaters cross busy streets and watch out for ghoulish behavior.
- Drive slowly all evening – you never know what creature may suddenly cross your path.
- Report any suspicious or criminal activity to your local police or sheriff's department.

## **EATING THE TREATS:**

- Feed children before they go trick-or-treating.
- Select a small amount of candy or other food to eat while trick-or-treating, so they won't be tempted to eat from the bag before their treats can be checked.
- Make sure an adult has carefully checked all candy before children eat it.
- Accept only wrapped candy. Check for any signs of tampering.
- Don't forget to inspect fruit and homemade goodies for anything suspicious. By all means, remind kids not to eat everything at once or they'll be feeling pretty ghoulish for awhile!

- Parents with children of different ages should sort the candies to make sure that younger kids don't get hold of small hard candies, peanuts or other objects that may get lodged in a youngster's throat.
- Some treats, especially chocolate, can be poisonous to pets.

### **COSTUME SAFETY:**

- Choose costumes that are flame resistant. Flame resistant does not mean the fabric won't catch fire, only that it will resist burning. Advise children to steer clear of candles, especially if their costumes are flimsy or loose fitting.
- Make sure costumes are bright enough to be seen by motorists. For added safety, attach strips of reflective tape to the child's costume.
- A costume should allow the child to walk freely without danger of tripping, falling, and bumping in the night. Shoes that are flat and fit well should be worn, even if they don't match the costume.
- Masks can be hot and uncomfortable and, more importantly, they can obstruct a child's vision – a dangerous thing when kids are crossing streets and going up and down steps. Make sure masks allow for full vision.
- Masks should allow for proper breathing. Consider non-toxic and hypoallergenic face paints, glues, or glitters as an alternative.
- Make sure swords, knives, or other similar objects have blunted ends and are made of a soft and flexible material.

### **PEDESTRIAN SAFETY:**

- Young children should always be accompanied by an adult as they go from door to door.
- Go only to well-lit houses and remain on porches rather than entering houses.
- Bring a flashlight if you plan to be out after dark.
- Know their phone number and carry coins for emergency telephone calls.
- Have their names and addresses attached to their costumes.
- Bring treats home before eating them so parents can inspect them.
- Use costume knives and swords that are flexible, not rigid or sharp.
- Obey all normal pedestrian safety rules such as only crossing streets at corners, not running out from between parked cars, and staying on the sidewalk.
- Stay in neighborhoods that you know.
- Watch for cars backing up or turning.
- Motorists should be extra cautious.
- Plan the trick-or-treating route and let someone at home know what it is.

For additional information contact your local Outreach and Extension Center or the MU Extension Rural Safety and Health Program at 1.800.995.8503.

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