



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Be safe and prepared this Halloween

Halloween is full of fun and candy for kids and can be somewhat scary for parents. Concerns include traffic safety, choking hazards, poisoned treats and nighttime visibility.

Being aware of the potential dangers and taking appropriate measure are key to keeping children safe.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), children are four times more likely to be in fatal pedestrian accidents on Halloween than on any other night of the year. Data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) says that most pedestrian/car accidents occur between the hours of 4 p.m. and 8 p.m., prime trick-or-treating hours. The National Center for Disease Control and Prevention found that 84 percent of pedestrian (children) fatalities occurred at non-intersections on Halloween, suggesting that children jaywalking and darting into traffic by children may have caused their death.

There are precautions you can take to make the night safer for all. In fact, most are appropriate year-round.

Make sure your child's costume is brightly colored and flame retardant. If not included, add reflective tape to the costume and collection bag. Avoid long and baggy costume material to prevent tripping. Ensure hats and masks are well-fitted and do not reduce vision in any direction. Masks should have adequate mouth and nose holes and larger holes for the eyes. Facial makeup is preferred to masks. When buying special Halloween makeup, check for packages containing ingredients that are labeled "Made with U.S. Approved Color Additives"; "Laboratory Tested"; "Meets Federal Standards for Cosmetics"; or "Non-Toxic." Follow the manufacturer's instruction for application.

Consider role playing different scenarios with children in the days before Halloween. Safety lessons can be taught to kids as young as 3 years. Include appropriate responses to invitations to enter homes and approaching vehicles. Remind them rules apply to people of all ages that they know and don't know. By age 5, kids can be encouraged to pay attention to their "gut buddies" (instincts) and to tell a parent when they "feel" uncomfortable. Around age 6 or 7, children begin to realize they are autonomous beings. Begin and maintain lines of communication early as these lines will be crucial in later years. Children under 12 should always be accompanied by and in view of a parent or trusted adult while trick-or-treating.

Provide flashlights with fresh batteries for children of all ages. Give them a healthy meal and a sweet treat before they leave to quell a rampant sweet tooth while on the run. Make sure they understand they cannot eat any treats until they check with you.

When children grow older, they want to assert their independence. As they approach their teens, they look to their friends for support and parents are typically no longer welcome to shadow their night's jaunt.

"If a child is too old to have their parents shadowing them, then perhaps they might be too old to trick or treat ... suggest they plan an at-home celebration," said Crime Prevention Specialist Tammy Descoteaux. "Their involvement in planning the event will ensure it includes activities that interest them. It can be simple - decorations and a few scary movies. Contests can be fun for costumes and scary food recipes with pot luck benefits too. Don't be surprised if talking is their favorite activity for the night."

What if your 12-year-old still wants to trick-or-treat with their friends and without any parents? As with any event, maturity and the responsibility of the child and friends should be considered. Trick or treating in groups of four to six is appropriate. It is important for parents to know each of their child's friends and parents should agree upon event guidelines. Peer friendships typically begin their importance at age 8. So again, if you start this practice early, maintaining it should be easier in the teen years.

Before leaving your home, review safety rules with children of all ages.

Trick-or-treating includes a set time and time limit, a pre-determined route and neighborhoods and houses that are well lit. Parents should be aware of any changes in the route beforehand.

Children should:

- Never enter any homes, under any circumstances.
- Use walkways and sidewalks travelling door to door.
- Walk; do not run, from house to house.
- Avoid crossing yards and lawns. It can be disrespectful and tripping hazards may be present.
- Walk on sidewalks, not in the street
- Obey traffic laws when crossing streets and driveways, taking time to watch for traffic
- Wait to eat any treats until they are inspected by parents
- Be careful first, have fun second!

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