



This article was produced in collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada.

HALLOWEEN SAFETY

The Issue

Halloween is a time of great excitement for children. However it is important to keep in mind all aspects of your child's safety when planning costumes, decorations, treats and activities on the special night itself. With some simple precautions, you can ensure that Halloween remains a safe and happy experience for the whole family.

Background

The excitement of Halloween can make children forget some of the safety rules they have learned. Lit jack-o-lanterns, flimsy or complicated costumes, street traffic and unsafe treats all have the potential to turn this fun occasion into a family tragedy.

Health and Safety Hazards of Halloween

Costumes

- Cold weather can be harmful if children are dressed in costumes or clothes that don't protect them.
- Long costumes can be a tripping hazard for children.
- Improper masks can interfere with a child's vision or breathing.
- Swords, knives and other accessories should always be made of flexible material.
- Flimsy materials, flowing skirts and baggy sleeves can all be hazards around candles or flames.
- Coloured contact lenses that change eye colour can be a hazard.

Decorations

- Carving pumpkins can cause injuries.
- Candles, jack-o-lanterns, lighters and matches are all fire hazards.

- Indoor and outdoor decorative lights that are substandard, cracked or frayed can be fire hazards.
- Halloween candles with multiple wicks close to one another can produce a single high flame or several large flames that produce intense heat and can ignite nearby materials such as curtains and window sills.

Trick or Treating

- Children who are not accompanied by an adult are vulnerable to injury, bullying by older children or predators.
- Children running across the street and off the sidewalks risk a collision with a motor vehicle.
- Unwrapped treats or those in loose packaging from unknown sources may be unsafe to eat.

Minimizing Your Risk

Taking these steps can ensure everyone has a good time.

Costumes

- Choose costumes that are loose enough to be worn over warm clothing, but not baggy enough that children trip over them.
- Pick brightly coloured costumes that can be clearly seen by motorists. Add reflective tape to the costume to increase visibility.
- Use make-up or face paint rather than masks. If you do choose a mask, make sure it allows your child to see and breathe properly.
- Look for costumes, beards and wigs that are labelled "Flame-Resistant." Nylon or heavy-weight polyester costumes are best. Even so, "Flame-Resistant" does not mean fire-proof. Avoid costumes with baggy sleeves or flowing skirts that could catch fire from flames and candles.



- Avoid contact lenses that change the colour of the eyes. They should only be used under the supervision of an eye-care professional.

Decorating

- Only adults should carve pumpkins. Let children draw a face on the pumpkin, which you can carve.
- Keep candles, jack-o-lanterns, matches and lighters in a place that children cannot reach.
- Instead of candles, consider using a small flashlight to light the jack-o-lantern.
- Make your home safe for ghouls and goblins by removing objects around the outside of your house that could cause children to trip or fall. Turn on your outside lights so that children know they can visit your place.
- If you are using indoor or outdoor decorative lights, make sure they are certified by a recognized organization such as the Canadian Standards Association or the Underwriters' Laboratory of Canada. Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections. Do not overload extension cords.
- Keep pets inside and away from trick or treaters and lit candles, especially if they are easily frightened or over-excitable.

Trick or Treating

- Go trick or treating with your children each year until they are old enough to go by themselves. When they are old enough, make sure they go with a buddy or in a group. Or follow along at a distance to keep an eye on them.
- Tell your children to walk, not run from house to house and to stay on the sidewalk or at the side of the road facing traffic. They should only cross the road at the corner and look both ways before crossing.
- Tell your children to stay in well-lit areas and only visit homes that have their outside lights turned on. Make sure they know never to go inside homes or cars.

- Give each child a flashlight to carry, to make them more visible.
- Tell your children not to eat any goodies until you have looked them over. Serve dinner before the children go out, so that they will be less tempted to eat goodies along the way.
- It is a good idea for you or your child to take a backpack along, to empty goodies into if the loot bag becomes too heavy.
- Examine the treats your children bring home before they start eating them. Throw out any treats that are not wrapped, have loose or torn wrappers or have holes in the wrappers.
- Check toys or novelty items for small parts and do not let children under three years of age play with them.
- You might want to consider an alternative to sugar-based treats, such as sugarless gum. Stickers, multi-coloured pencils or beads can be a nice replacement for, or an addition to, traditional treats. Ask your children for suggestions.
- For diabetic children, let them eat the potato chips, peanuts and sugar-free gum from the loot bags. They can also keep some of the other treats, such as chocolate and candy, which can fit into their meal plan in the following days or weeks. Leftover treats can be traded with other children or given to less fortunate kids.

General Safety

- If you are driving on Halloween, be aware of children. Slow down and enter and exit driveways and alleyways cautiously.

Government of Canada's Role

Health Canada provides information related to the health and safety of the Canadian public. It administers and enforces the Hazardous Products Act and its Regulations.

Need More Info?

For more information on Halloween safety, contact the following.

Health Canada
Have a Safe and Spooky Halloween :
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/secure/season-saison/hal/index_e.html

Costumes and Dress-Up :
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/child-enfant/access/costumes/index_e.html

Children's Jewellery :
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/child-enfant/access/jewel-bij/index_e.html

Cosmetics and Personal Care Products :
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/person/cosmet/index_e.html

Candles :
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/house-domes/fire-feu/cand-boug/index_e.html

Contact Consumer Product Safety by calling 1-866-662-0666. Calls will be routed to the nearest regional Product Safety Office.

Or visit:

Canadian Paediatric Society, Halloween Safety: Tips for parents and kids
www.caringforkids.cps.ca/keepingkidssafe/HalloweenSafety.htm

Government of Canada, Halloween Safety Tips
www.safecanada.ca/link_e.asp?category=21&topic=133

Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Food Safety Tips for Halloween
www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/concen/tipcon/hallowe.shtml

For additional articles on health and safety issues go to the It's Your Health Web site at:
www.healthcanada.gc.ca/iyh
You can also call toll free at 1-866-225-0709
or TTY at 1-800-267-1245*

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