

October 25, 2010

## **Basic Tips for Halloween Safety**

### Trick-or-Treat Safety Tips

While autumn brings cooler weather and golden leaves, it also ushers in aisles full of candy, costumes and creepy critters at local retailers. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were approximately 36 million trick-or-treaters aged 5 to 13 in 2009. There is no doubt that Halloween is big business, but it can also be a time of concern as children hit the streets in search of sweet treasure.

There are a number of hazards related to Halloween. The hazards are generally far more mundane than urban myth would have it. Fortunately for parents, they are far easier to guard against as well. The American Academy of Pediatrics has issued several Halloween safety tips, which can help keep children out of harm's way.

To begin with, find costumes, wigs and accessories that are labeled "flame resistant". Many well-intentioned neighbors have jack-o-lanterns with real flames sitting on porches or along walkways which could be within easy reach of visitors. The term, "flame resistant" does not mean "flame proof", but it does mean that the item burns more slowly and is more easily extinguishable if it does ignite.

Also, make sure costumes and footwear fit properly to avoid tripping or entangling a child as they walk. Costumes should be bright and reflective to alert passing motorists. Reflective tape can even be added to the child's clothing or trick-or-treat bag to enhance visibility. Flashlights or glow stick can further increase the chances that children are seen.

Consider using face paints or makeup instead of masks, which could obscure vision or obstruct breathing. If a mask is used, make sure it fits properly and has large eye and mouth holes.

Accessories, like canes, wands or swords should be examined for sharpness and the potential for injury due to a fall. Likewise, children should be warned about the dangers of pointing these objects at others. It might be best to leave these items at home so they are not dropped or forgotten along the trick-or-treating route.

Young trick-or-treaters should always be accompanied by a responsible adult. For older children planning on going alone, a parent or guardian should review the route beforehand and decide on an acceptable return time. Cell phones can be an invaluable source of contact.

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All trick-or-treaters should be taught to use sidewalks and stay out of the streets. Cutting between parked cars can have deadly consequences, so only use street corners to cross. Walking across lawns or other landscaping can include hidden dangers, like potential falls from electrical cords connected to seemingly harmless Halloween displays. Only visit homes with visible porch lights and warn children against entering any home without prior permission.

Upon returning home, have an adult check and sort the treats, throwing out anything unwrapped or suspicious looking. Treat-tampering is a rare occurrence, but is still a possibility.

With an awareness of some of the dangers a trick-or-treater may face, potential tragedies can be 100% preventable. Thus, the scariest night of the year can be enjoyed for all the thrills and chills it brings.

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