

# HALLOWEEN SAFETY



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## **It's All In Good Fun...For Most Of Us**

Halloween is a great time of year. The kids love dressing up in costumes, being scary, being scared, and of course, getting all of those treats. For most of us, it is all in good fun, and we see it as something that marks the end of those long summer days, and for many, the beginning of the actual holiday season. We have Halloween, and gear up for Thanksgiving, followed by Christmas and the New Year.

Again, it is a great time of year, and all in good fun – for most of us. There are those in the world who take the term ‘Trick –or –Treating’ to a whole new level and not one that normal, sane people think about.

However, as a parent, you must think about it. We've all heard the horror stories of kids being snatched on Halloween and of candy being poisoned – and naturally, we take precautions to prevent such things from happening. For decades now, we've known that you never allow your children to go Trick-or-Treating alone, to go to stranger's houses, or to eat their candy before you have the opportunity to ‘check’ it.

By ten o'clock p.m, on October 31<sup>st</sup>, there will literally be millions of parents sitting either at their kitchen table or on their living room floor, with pumpkin buckets full of candy dumped out, checking each and every piece for any sign that it has been tampered with, before allowing their children to have that candy. There will also be millions in hospitals, having their children's candy x-rayed. This is a service that hospitals across the nation are now offering.

It's sad that our world – and a holiday that our kids have such fun with – has come to this, but those dangers have always been there. We just hear more about them these days because of the communication technology that we now have.

But there are also other dangers that many of us do not consider as well. In fact, the chances of your child being snatched or poisoned on Halloween are very slim. This doesn't by any means mean that it cannot happen, or that you should relax your protection standards or rules. It just means that there are greater chances of something else happening on Halloween.

The truth is that there are a lot of things that can go wrong on Halloween where our kids are concerned, and not all of those things pertain to child predators or sick people who want to poison little children.

Your child could trip on their costume and bust their head wide open. They could choke on a piece of candy. They could get hit by a car. As parents, these are things that scare the living daylights out of us. Our kids don't think of these

dangers. They think that they are invincible – immortal. Unfortunately, we cannot bottle them up and protect them from the dangers of the world for their entire lives, so instead, we have to find other ways of protecting them, without sheltering them from the world and the dangers that exist.

We really do want to protect them. We even want to shelter them. We don't want our kids to know that there are bad people out there. We don't want them to know that other children have been kidnapped, tortured and killed. So, we avoid talking about those things.

But by doing so, we may be doing our children more harm than good. If you don't know a danger exists, how can you possibly protect yourself from it? You can't – and neither can your children. The biggest danger of all is and always has been ignorance.

Did you think that the 'boogieman' was something that your parents came up with out of thin air? They didn't. We eventually came to believe that the 'boogieman' and monsters were just make believe – but they are very real. We hear about them on the news everyday.

The use of 'boogiemens' and 'monsters' makes our children more aware. It lets them know, in a child's way, that there are indeed dangers in this old world of ours, and they must be aware of their surroundings. You may spend many evenings looking under the bed for monsters – but at least you know that your children are aware that there are dangers.

These monsters prevent us from having to warn or explain to our children about things that are much worse to imagine – like child rape or people who will actually poison their candy – until they are old enough to better understand such things, and until they reach an age where they wouldn't be scarred by that information.

What you choose to tell your child about the dangers that exist are up to you. Just be careful that you aren't doing your children a disservice by not warning them – in some way – as to the fact that there really are dangers that exist.

With that said, we are ready to get down to Halloween safety for your children. In this guide, we will cover numerous items that you may not have considered. These include costume safety, face makeup, costume accessories, candy, trick-or-treating safety, safety at parties, safety tips for your kids, and other considerations.

Let's get started!

## Costume Safety

Halloween is a time to get creative – not only for us, but for our kids. Each year, we ask our children ‘what do you want to be for Halloween?’ Each year, we get some very creative responses. Each year, we spend a lot of money either buying ready made costumes, or spending time and money creating special costumes ourselves. The days of cutting some holes in an old white sheet and going as a ghost are long gone – and this is a good thing from a safety aspect.

First and foremost, you want a costume constructed of materials that are flame resistant. Your children will be passing by lighted candles on Halloween night, as this is part of the Halloween theme and traditions. Unfortunately, those flames, and costumes that are not flame resistant, can turn a good time into a tragedy – very fast. Not only should the costume that is worn on the body be flame resistant, this also includes masks, beards, wigs, and accessories.

You should note that a flame resistant material does not mean that it won’t catch on fire. What it means is that it is harder to catch such material on fire. If such material comes into contact with flames, it will burn, and continue to burn, until the costume is removed from the source of flames.

If the costume comes into contact with flames, remove it from the child immediately to make sure that nothing underneath the costume has caught on fire. You can also avoid fire by making sure to avoid costumes that are too big or baggy, or those that have long billowing sleeves or skirts.

The actual design of the costume should be your next concern. First, make sure that the costume is reflective – or make it reflective by adding reflective tape to it. This will make it possible for others – especially motorists – to see your child.

Do not choose a costume that drags the ground for a child. This can lead to tripping and falling. While such a costume may be desired for adults, who are more aware of that danger, you should choose a costume that still allows you to see the child’s shoes for safety’s sake.

Shoes are another factor. While adult women know that the shoes make the outfit, this isn’t necessarily something that should be a concern on Halloween. A child wearing high heeled shoes on Halloween night is dangerous.

Their shoes should not only be comfortable, they should be sturdy and fit well – even if they don’t really work into the theme of the costume. One thing that you can do is to purchase black shoes, or spray paint shoes black, so that they aren’t easily seen or noticed – as long as the costume is reflective.

For safety reasons, avoid using a mask that covers the child's face and blocks their vision. See the next section on makeup safety for more information on this. Makeup is preferable to a mask, or even a half mask.

If you must use a mask, however, make sure that the eye holes are large enough so that the vision is not obstructed, and also make sure that plenty of air is able to get inside the mask, so that you're child doesn't lack oxygen – and so that carbon monoxide that we produce when exhaling isn't accumulating inside the mask. Also make sure that hats and scarves won't be used in a way that obstructs the child's vision.

Because Halloween occurs in the early fall, we have no way of knowing, in most cases, how cold it may be in advance. For this reason, either make or purchase a costume that is big enough to wear layers of clothing underneath. At the same time, make sure that it isn't so big that should the night be warmer, that the costume isn't too loose or baggy if additional clothing is not needed.

You never know what is going to happen. Therefore, it is vital that you make or purchase a costume that can get quickly removed. Instead of using ties, which may knot, use snaps and Velcro closures. Furthermore, closures should be in the front of the costume, where the child can reach them.

Make sure that no part of the costume covers your child's ears. This could prevent them from hearing things that they need to hear – such as a car horn, the sound of an engine, or other warning sounds.

Finally, make sure that you sew a tag inside your child's costume. This tag should contain the child's name, your name, their address, and your phone number. Halloween is exciting, and in the chaos, children can become lost, despite your best efforts. Make sure that the child knows that the tag is inside their clothing, so that they can quickly inform another adult how to get them back to where they need to be.

We want our children to have fun, and part of that fun is dressing up. At the same time, we want them to be safe. Make sure that you take safety into consideration when choosing the costume, buying it, or creating it. Try the costume on the child, and look for safety issues that may not be covered here. Simply put your mind into gear, and stop focusing on how cute they are – and think about how the costume may be a danger to them, or how it may create a dangerous situation.

Once you have identified a safety concern, you can usually find a way around it – a way to make it safer for your child.

## Face Makeup Safety

Face makeup is much safer than using a mask; however, it is important to understand that makeup itself also has dangers. You must use caution when purchasing and using such makeup.

First, make sure that you read the packaging that the makeup comes in. It should be non-toxic. Never assume that any makeup designated for Halloween is non-toxic. Read the package!

If your child has sensitive skin, the Halloween makeup may cause them to break out in a rash. If this is the case, there are many recipes for homemade makeup, using all natural products, on the Internet. Use these instead of commercial makeup.

If you don't think your child has sensitive skin, apply some of it on a small spot twenty four to forty eight hours in advance. Leave it on for three or four hours, and then remove it. Wait to see how the skin reacts to it before smearing it all over their faces!

Use care when applying the makeup. Obviously, you don't want to get it in the child's eyes, nose, or mouth – even if it is non-toxic. Think about how the makeup will hold up during the evenings. If your child sweats, will it start running? Will it run into their eyes, nose or mouth? Apply the makeup in such a way that even if it starts running, it doesn't run into these areas.

Make sure that you follow all of the directions on the packaging carefully. Never use anything on the skin that is not meant for the skin, in terms of Halloween makeup. Note that the pictures of the packaging can be misleading. You may see a picture of a completely made up face – including eyes that are covered with makeup. If you look at the packaging, however, you may learn that the makeup poses a danger if it gets into the eyes. Again, read that packaging!

Don't overdo it! If your child does not have sensitive skin, you may think that it is safe to use a lot of the makeup on their faces. This isn't necessarily true. Often, a light coating of the makeup does not damage, but a heavy coating can cause skin irritations.

Read the ingredients of the makeup! Makeup must be approved by the FDA (Food and Drug Administration). The makeup producer must include a list of the ingredients used in that makeup. Be aware of what you are putting on your child. Take that list, and visit the FDA website at <http://www.fda.gov> and see exactly what those ingredients are.

Also check out the color additives used in the makeup. Some of them are not safe to use on certain parts of the body or skin, and again, this is information that you can obtain from the FDA's website.

Fluorescent colors should never be used near the eyes. Most of these colors contain D&C Orange #5, 10, and 11, D&C Red #21, 22, 27, and 28, and D&C Yellow #7.

Make sure that you remove all of the makeup before sending your child to bed. Do not allow them to sleep in it. Makeup can be removed with shortening, cold cream, and baby oil. Once it is removed, make sure that you wash your child's face well with soap and water.

If the makeup causes a reaction, or stains the skin, take your child to the doctor for treatment. Also contact the FDA. The FDA wants to be informed, so that they can check things out, warn others, and force manufacturers to make improvements that do not present a hazard to consumers.

Do not use glue on your child's face. This will most likely cause an irritation. It also isn't safe to get glue near your children's eyes, nose, or mouth. They can inhale fumes from the glue. Again, don't use any substance on the skin that was not intended for use on the skin.

Aside from doing your own investigating concerning the ingredients of makeup, you should also look for certain terms on the packaging. These include 'laboratory tested,' 'meets federal standards for cosmetics,' 'non-toxic,' and 'U.S approved color additives.'

We want our children to 'look the part' but not if it means risking their health or skin. Don't be afraid to 'ruin' the costume by forgoing the makeup if that is what you feel that you need to do. You can easily do this, without taking anything away from the costume, by making the costume itself more detailed. Your child probably won't mind – especially if you explain the health hazards to them.

Fake teeth are often used as part of the costume effect, and we want to cover this in the makeup section. First, make sure that any makeup won't be smeared or touched when the teeth are removed and placed in the mouth. This may transfer the makeup to the mouth – and down the throat. This can be very dangerous.

Also make sure that your child understands germs, and that they don't share their fake teeth with others. Make sure that you use a solution of warm water and salt to clean the fake teeth before the first use as well. Check for any 'rough' spots on the fake teeth that may cut your child's mouth. Do not save fake teeth for the following year. They are cheap – throw them away!

## Costume Accessory Safety

You can't be a swash buckler without a sword. You can't be a fairy princess without a wand. You must have something to collect your candy in. Accessories are an integral part of many costumes, and of Halloween itself.

Obviously, you aren't about to hand your child a real sword to make their costume complete. But at the same time, you shouldn't hand them a hard plastic sword, which can be just as dangerous.

There are two accessories that your child must have. First, they need a container to carry their candy. Sometimes, the container can be part of the costume, and sometimes it cannot. For example, if a child dresses up as an ugly old woman, she could use an ugly old purse to collect her candy in.

You may not realize that this candy collection container actually has safety concerns. First, it shouldn't be so big that it will be hard for the child to carry when it becomes full. Bring a paper or plastic bag along in the car, or you carry the big bag, and allow the child to 'dump' their candy into it when their container becomes full. Next, make sure that it is bright and colorful. This will help with the reflective issue, making your child easier to see.

Your child should carry a flashlight – even if you are with them. This makes them easier to see also, and helps them see if the path is dark. The flashlight could actually be incorporated into the costume or into the needed accessory if you use your imagination and creativity.

Other than the flashlight, all accessories should be very flexible. It should stand without collapsing on its own, but if it comes into contact with something else, like your child or someone else's child, it should easily bend, so that it doesn't cause damage. It should not have any sharp edges.

Obviously, the object should not be heavy. Not only will your child tire easily from carrying it, they could also drop it on their foot or someone else's and cause damage.

While this isn't really a safety concern, note that you may end up carrying the accessory if your child gets tired of carrying it. Use your imagination and figure out a way that the accessory can be attached to the child, when they tire of carrying it. For example, a fake sword needs a fake sheaf, which can be attached to the child's waist. Just make sure that it doesn't hinder the child from walking, or that it poses a tripping hazard.

Really think about the construction of accessories, and realize that it isn't just pointed and sharp items that you need to worry about. For example, a sickle or

an axe has a sharp blade, which can be constructed with soft, non-sharp material, but it still has to be attached to something – like a stick. While a stick may not look dangerous, if your child trips and falls, and lands a certain way on that stick, tragedy can occur. Make sure that the entire accessory is soft and flexible – not just part of it. If nothing else, make sure that it will break with a little weight added to it.

Don't allow your child to carry glass objects. For example, your child might carry a genie bottle. Make sure that it is plastic – not glass.

Aside from choosing accessories that are light and flexible, teach your child safety precautions when it comes to holding the item. For example, they should never poke or jab at someone else with their sword – no matter how fake it is.

You have to look at things from your child's point of view. If it is okay to point and poke their soft flexible sword at another child while playing, they won't realize that it isn't okay to do the same with a real sword, or a real butcher knife that is functioning as a sword. Again, you must think about how your child puts things into perspective.

While you probably already know this, a child should never carry fire – regardless of how it completes the costume. There are those parents who give their children real lit candles and lanterns to carry. Don't do this. It is just asking for trouble.

Also avoid using accessories that are constructed from materials that are not fire resistant. As they walk by fires and candles, there is a risk that their accessory could catch fire. While they could drop the flaming accessory to avoid getting burned, it could start a fire that you don't want to start.

Just as you consider your child's makeup and costume use careful consideration with their accessories. Look at the potential dangers associated with them, and fix whatever needs to be fixed to make the item safer for your child and those around them – or forgo the accessory altogether.

Don't forget to use the accessories to make your child more visible. If they aren't reflective accessories, add pieces of reflective tape so that your child can be easily seen by others.

## Candy Safety

Ahh, the candy! Aside from the costumes and the wonderful world of make believe, this is what Halloween is really about – the candy – the treats! They've dressed up and tricked; now they want their treats!

While most children will want to eat their candy right away, you must make them wait. It is dangerous to eat candy that you have not inspected first. Again, as sad as it is, there are those in the world who get some kind of pleasure out of knowing that they are causing harm to children. It is sick, but it is a fact that exists in our world.

First and foremost, before you leave home, have a serious talk with your child. You must tell them that there really are bad people in the world, and make them understand that they are not to eat any of their candy – not even one piece – unless you have inspected it first. Make sure that they understand and agree.

You can cut down on your children wanting their candy, and pestering you for it by giving them a meal before they go out trick-or-treating. Give them a Halloween treat after dinner as well, to calm the craving for sweets that Halloween automatically causes as well.

Rule number one for candy inspections is if in doubt, throw it away. It is always better to be safe than sorry. Some will tell you to automatically throw out fruits and homemade treats. This is usually the best idea, unless the fruit or homemade treat comes from somebody that you know.

When this happens, make sure that you set those treats aside, so that you don't have to wonder which homemade goody came from which person later on. If you don't know the person well, don't allow you child to eat the homemade treat, or fruit, which can be injected with a syringe and needle without detection.

Look at each piece of wrapped candy. Does it appear to have been unwrapped at any point? If so, throw it away. Look for any tears in sealed packages, and if any exist, throw it away.

Before Halloween, talk with your community. Recommend that anyone handing out Halloween candy attach an address label on the candy, with their address. This way, you know exactly where each piece of candy came from. If your community does get involved, it will be easier to sort through the candy – automatically throw out any candy that does not have an address label.

Of course, many people don't want to take the time to address the candy they are handing out, so getting your community to do this may be difficult. Aside from checking each piece of candy, you can also have your candy x-rayed.

Note, however, that an x-ray will not detect poison. It will only detect foreign materials – such as glass or needles. Hospitals and fire stations in many communities offer this service for free on Halloween night.

Now, with all of this said, you need to understand that poisoned Halloween candy doesn't happen nearly as often as the media has lead us to believe that it does. In fact, according to news sources, it has really only happened twice. In one instance, a man really did feed pixie stix, laced with cyanide, to his son, who died. In another instance, a lady was arrested for handing out objects, instead of candy. One of those objects was an ant button (poison for ants).

There are always news reports of these things happening, but upon further investigation, it is always found to be false. Unfortunately, the fact that the stories were false does not make interesting reading, so you rarely hear that small detail.

The instances of people putting dangerous objects in candy, aside from poison, however, are very real. Pins, needles, glass, and razor blades are the main culprits to watch out for. However, if you have the candy x-rayed, this won't be a concern at all for you and your children. Furthermore, these objects may cause injury, but will not cause death.

Just because poisoning stories are false, this doesn't mean that you need to let your guard down. Because so many rumors circulate so widely, there is always the chance that this puts the idea in some crazy person's head, and they actually do it. Again, make sure that you are checking each piece of candy your child received, and that you are throwing out anything that doesn't look right.

Your best bet, of course, is not to allow your child to trick-or-treat at strangers houses. Instead, drive them around to various relatives house, allow them to trick-or-treat for a little while in your own neighborhood – where you know the neighbors, and then take them to a Halloween party – or host one yourself.

Many malls across the country offer safe trick-or-treating. The stores decorate, and the children go from one store to another trick-or-treating. There have never been any instances of 'poisoned' candy or objects hidden in the treats collected from the mall trick-or-treating. You can call your local mall to find out if they will be hosting trick-or-treating, and what hours they will be doing so. They usually also have Halloween costume contests and games for the kids to play, which makes it even more fun.

## **Trick-or-Treating Safety**

For the safety of you and your children, you need to establish some rules that will be followed before you leave your house. Make sure that your child understands and agrees to the rules, and also understands that if they break the rules, the trick-or-treating will be over for the year.

Rule 1 – Nobody is to dart in and out from between parked cars.

Rule 2 – The children must have an adult or responsible teenager with them while trick-or-treating. This is typically limited to children under the age of twelve, but you may want an adult with a 13 year old as well. Most children over the age of 13 do not trick-or-treat. They usually attend a Halloween party instead.

Rule 3 – Have a planned route to follow before you leave. Make sure that another adult knows that route, and then stick to it. If you are taking a group, make sure that you know the names and faces of all of the children in your group.

Rule 4 – Stick to areas that you know well. Do not venture outside of your own neighborhood. Not only are you taking candy from strangers if you do so, but you are also putting yourself at risk by not knowing the area as well as you know your own neighborhood.

Rule 5 - Only stop at houses that are well-lit. It seems that the International sign for welcoming trick-or-treaters is to have a porch light that is turned on.

Rule 6 – Under no circumstances should you enter the home or apartment of someone that you do not know. It doesn't matter what they say – do not go inside.

Rule 7 – Children should not eat any candy before you get home and inspect it. You should have a set time when the trick-or-treating will be over and you return home. Make sure that someone else who is not with you knows what time to expect you back.

Rule 8 – Make sure that you and your children know road safety rules for pedestrians.

Rule 9 – Your child will be very excited, and in a big hurry to collect their candy. Instruct them to walk, not run, from house to house. Also establish rules about running ahead of you or the person supervising them.

Rule 10 – Walk on the sidewalk, if there is one. If not, walk on the side of the road. Avoid walking across lawns, as there may be objects that can't be well seen.

Rule 11 – Whether on the sidewalk or the road, walk on the left side, facing oncoming traffic.

Rule 12 – Trust your instincts. If you have always felt that a neighbor was strange, skip their house. It is better to skip them than to take unnecessary chances.

Rule 13 – While every likes to trick-or-treat after dark, many people now go before dark. This is especially true if there are younger children with earlier bedtimes. This is safer, and something that you should consider. It's not about being in the dark, after all. It's about showing off the costume and collecting the candy.

Rule 14 – Avoid driving your child. This poses a danger to other children who are walking. People who drive are typically trick-or-treating outside of their own neighborhood. Stick to your own neighborhood and walk.

Rule 15 – Be prepared for your child to poop out before you can get them back home. You might consider pulling their wagon along. You can keep your bigger bag for the candy dumps in the wagon – and if the child tires out, they can ride in the wagon while you pull them home. It beats carrying a five year old all the way home!

Rule 16 – Don't put all of the responsibility on one person. While children need at least one adult to supervise, the adults will do well with another adult along to help. The more adults there are in the group, the safer the entire group is. Buddy up with your neighbor, your best friend, or your spouse to take the kids on the rounds. There is safety in numbers.

Rule 17 – Don't walk farther than you and the children are willing to walk a second time. You eventually have to walk home.

Rule 18 – Never accept a ride from a stranger. If someone offers you a ride, and they are acting strangely, go to the nearest neighbor's house that you know and ask to use the phone. Call someone to come and get you. One rule of the road here to consider – just as you would never get into a strangers vehicle, a person will not ask a stranger to get into their vehicle – unless they have ill intentions.

If you and your child are willing to follow these rules, you should have a very safe Halloween night. Remember to establish the rules, and the consequences for breaking the rules, before you leave home.

## Party Safety

While many people host Halloween parties, there are those that go trick-or-treating for a while, and then attend a Halloween party. Some do not trick-or-treat at all, doing all of their Halloween celebrating at the party of their choice. Most of the older kids do this.

You may think that you are avoiding the dangers of Halloween altogether by either hosting or attending a party instead, but this isn't necessarily the case. There are dangers everywhere you go. Here are some tips to have or attend a safe Halloween party.

1. Candles are a part of Halloween, but during a party, there is a great deal of movement. Avoid the use of real candles, and instead use electric candles.
2. Do not serve alcoholic beverages at a party children will be attending. The adults need to stay completely sober to supervise.
3. If your party will be an 'open house,' where even strangers are welcome, make sure that you appoint a responsible – well known - adult to keep an eye on the food and beverages.
4. If there will be a lot of people at your Halloween party, including strangers, use some kind of system that matches children with their parents, and appoint someone at the exits to match them up when they are leaving. This could be as simple as name tags or hand stamps.
5. If you are hosting the party, clear the room of all furniture and breakables. Set up tables and folding chairs – and don't use anything that you don't want to see damaged.
6. Have a party plan. Have a list of games that will be played. Include a Halloween costume. Otherwise, people will quickly become bored. Boredom and children do not mix well.
7. If you will have a haunted house, make sure that any ingredients that you use for scary stuff are non-toxic.
8. If you want your punch bowl to fog, use dry ice. However, make sure that you are not serving any dry ice chips in the cups, or injury can occur when they are ingested.
9. Close and lock doors to rooms that will not be used during the party.

10. To protect the interior of your home, don't host an indoor party at all. Instead, have a yard haunt, and serve punch and cupcakes outdoors. Have a series of games lined up as well, and host a costume party as well. You will still have a lively party – but you won't have to worry so much.
11. Make sure you keep hot items, such as coffee pots, out of the reach of the children.
12. Secure all electrical cords, ensuring that nobody will trip over them. Put them under furniture that will not be moved if possible.
13. If you are bobbing for apples, make sure that an adult is supervising. After the game, remove the barrel of water and empty it. Adults should supervise all of the games.
14. Making things dark may make them scarier – but it also makes them more dangerous. Don't try to do anything with little light. This can be resolved by replacing all of the regular bulbs with black lights, which emit a purple glow. If you feel that more light is needed, use green or blue colored bulbs instead.
15. Some parties will have music, while others will use CD's that have scary sound effects. Regardless of which one you choose, make sure that it isn't so loud that you couldn't hear someone calling for help if it was needed.
16. Have a starting time and an ending time for the party. Otherwise, you could have people in your home all night!
17. Even if you smoke, do not allow anyone to smoke inside the house. Designate a place outside for smokers. This will reduce the chances of a stray ember or forgotten cigarette starting a fire in your home.
18. Designate a place for coats, and if trick-or-treaters are attending your party, designate a place for them to put their candy containers. Make sure that this area is watched by a responsible adult.

It's easy to make a Halloween party fun – but fun can quickly be ruined if you aren't diligent. Ideally, if you are hosting an indoor party, you should only invite people that you know. If you are opening your party to strangers, host it outdoors for safety.

## Safety Tips For Kids

While younger children will be escorted by an adult on Halloween, there are older children, aged 12 or 13, that will be trick-or-treating without an adult. Here are some tips to help them have a safe Halloween. Make sure that you share this information with your older child before allowing them to leave the house!

1. Carry a flashlight, and keep it on. While it can be used to see in dark places, it can also be used to make you more visible. Even if you think the street lights are enough, keep the flashlight on.
2. Stay on the sidewalk, and out of the streets and yards.
3. Do not venture out of your own neighborhood. Establish a route with your parents ahead of time, and stick to that route.
4. Parents should know the children in the group that is trick-or-treating together. Make sure that parents have the names and phone numbers of all children in the group.
5. Your parents will most likely require you to be home by a certain time, and may require you to check in periodically throughout the evening. Make sure that you do this – and do not be late. Wear a watch that lights up in the dark.
6. If you must walk on the road, stay to the side of the road, and walk towards oncoming traffic. This typically means walking on the left side of the road.
7. Do not pet animals. Not all animals are friendly. Stay out of their reach. If an animal is running loose, go the opposite direction, but try to avoid running, as their instinct will be to chase you.
8. Only go to homes that are well lit. Typically, a burning porch light means that trick-or-treaters are welcome.
9. Carry a cell phone, with your home number on speed dial. Don't be afraid to call your parents to come and get you if you feel that you are in danger.
10. Stay tuned into your surroundings. Always know what street you are on, and what is going on around you.
11. Don't allow other kids to lead you astray. Do not participate in destructive behavior, such as egging houses or cars, or wrapping houses with toilet paper. This is vandalism, and it is against the law.

12. Walk, don't run. You may be in a hurry, but you are risking injury if you run. You don't wear a Halloween costume everyday, and you may not be aware of how limited your running skills are.
13. Never walk into anyone's home! This is vital. Don't even enter the homes of people that you kind of know. Just stay outside, and don't get too close to the door.
14. Do not get into a vehicle with anyone, at any time, for any reason – unless it is your parents, or a parent of someone in your group. Before you do that, use the cell phone and call your parents to make sure that they approve. If you and your friends are being picked up by your parents, allow your friends to use the cell phone to call their parents.
15. Stick with your group. There is safety in numbers. Do not split up for any reason.
16. Do not eat your treats before you get home. You may think that you are old enough to know what to eat, and what not to eat, but for safety's sake, please let your parents go through your treats with you before eating them.
17. You may think that the rules set by your parents are lame, but every rule that they have is designed to protect you from the dangers of the world. Halloween is a fun time to pretend, but there really are 'monsters' in the world that you must be aware of and guard against. Obey the rules set by your parents.

Ideally, a parent will even go with older children. Of course, these older children do not want, or feel that they need supervision. If you would rather accompany your children, you can agree to 'hang back' behind them. You can stay so far back that you won't even hear their conversation – the idea is to still be able to see them.

Again, the older children may not like this, but the truth is that they seldom like anything that you do for their safety. Ignore their dislike of your intrusion and tag along anyway. Again, it is always better to be safe than sorry! Tell them that you will not interfere in their good time and that you will hang back behind them, but that you are indeed going – or they are staying home.

## Other Considerations

Aside from all of the safety concerns for Halloween that you have read so far, there are a few others that people seldom think about. Here is some additional information that you should consider for Halloween safety.

As mentioned in the section for safety tips for kids, you should be aware that people have pets. Some pets can look very friendly. They may even be friendly with people that they know well.

Stop and think about how that pet is going to react to multiple unknown people walking all over their property. Pets can be extremely territorial, and all of those trick-or-treaters are threatening their territory, as far as they are concerned.

Otherwise friendly pets can become very nervous on Halloween. This nervous state can make them very dangerous. Avoid other people's pets, and if you own a pet, keep that pet in the house, and in a room that will not allow them to escape out of the front door each time you open it.

Whether you are handing out candy or not, and regardless of the fact that Halloween safety rules say to steer clear of people's lawns, many people will disregard this, and you will have trick-or-treaters crossing your lawn.

Make your lawn safer for them by putting up bikes, toys, and lawnmowers. Roll up the garden hose, and if you cannot move your dog indoors, put him on a leash, preferably in the back yard. Really look at your yard and remove anything that poses a danger – whether that danger is tripping or scraping.

Avoid using real flames if possible. Instead, use electric candles and jack o'lanterns. If candles must be used, make sure that they are well away from the path that trick-or-treaters will be taking through your yard.

Instead of having trick-or-treaters come to your door, sit outside and wait for them. Not only will you get to see all of the action, but this makes it safer for you and the children.

Avoid giving out homemade treats. While these were once greatly appreciated at Halloween, they are now 'suspect' and are often thrown out, instead of eating. Instead, purchase candy that comes in sealed packages, as opposed to packages that just twist closed. Also avoid handing out fruit.

It is a good idea to have two types of candy – candy for really small children, and candy for the children who can eat any type of candy. Really small children should not be given any type of hard candy. You can also hand out non-food treats, such as erasers, plastic rings, stickers, coins, etc.

Keep your home lit up, until you are either out of candy, the trick-or-treating has wrapped up for the night, or until you are ready to stop handing out candy. At that point, turn off all of the outside lights. Before then, however, keep your yard, sidewalk, porch, and driveway as well lit as possible, to enable trick-or-treaters to see well.

Block off areas that you don't want trick-or-treaters walking through – like your flower bed. Make sure that the blockade can be well seen. One way to do this is to incorporate your blocked off area into your Halloween decorations. For example, you can put use spray spider webs over your flower bed, and this will prevent people from walking there.

If you will be driving on Halloween night, try to avoid residential neighborhoods. If those areas cannot be avoided, drive very slowly. In fact, just coast, with your foot ready to brake. Children get very excited on Halloween, and don't always follow traffic safety rules. Make sure that you keep your car doors locked.

Take a picture of your child, dressed in their costume, before they leave the house. Use a Polaroid or digital camera. You don't want to have to use this picture, but if it is needed, you will have it ready. If they are wearing a mask, take a picture with the mask on, and with the mask off.

Halloween really is a special time of year, and it can turn tragic if you aren't careful. However, if you go into it with a set of safety rules that everyone agrees to follow, and with some thoughtful planning, you and your children will have a marvelous time, and you will be creating good memories that will last a lifetime!

Your children may think that you are going overboard with the safety, but as a parent, you know that there is really no such thing. You want them to be safe, and to have fun – in that order!