

# The Medical Minute: There's no trick to a safe Halloween

October 22 2008, By Susan Rzucidlo

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Halloween is supposed to be a spooky night, but parents don't have to be scared about their kids' safety if they follow some simple safety tips from Safe Kids Dauphin County, led by Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital, Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. It's essential for parents to prepare their children properly to stay safe while trick-or-treating. According to Susan Rzucidlo, pediatric trauma program manager and coordinator for Safe Kids Dauphin County, "roughly four times as many children ages 5-14 are killed while walking on Halloween evening compared with other evenings of the year."

With the days getting shorter, children are likely to be trick-or-treating in the dark, when it is harder for drivers to see them, and the excitement of the holiday can make everyone less cautious. To keep kids safe, parents should remind them about walking safely and ensure that they will be seen by drivers this Halloween.

## Tips for Parents

Safe Kids recommends that children under age 10 do not trick-or-treat without adult supervision. If kids are mature enough to go trick-or-treating without supervision, make sure they go in a group and they stick to a predetermined route with good lighting. Parents must also remind kids to:

Cross streets safely. Cross at a corner, using traffic signals and

crosswalks. Try to make eye contact with drivers before crossing in front of them. Look left, right and left again when crossing, and keep looking as you cross. Walk, don't run, across the street.

Walk on well-lit sidewalks or paths. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic as far to the left as possible. Children should walk in familiar areas with minimal street crossings.

Be a safe pedestrian around cars. Watch for cars that are turning or backing up. Never dart out into the street or cross between parked cars. Make sure treats are safe treats. Tell children to bring their treats home before eating them. Parents should check treats to ensure that items have not been tampered with and are safely sealed. Be careful with fruit. Inspect the surface closely for punctures or holes and cut it open before allowing a child to eat it.

## **Tips for Drivers**

Drivers need to do their part to keep trick-or-treaters safe from harm. Safe Kids also reminds motorists to be extra careful this Halloween and recommends that drivers:

Be especially alert. Remember that popular trick-or-treating hours are during the typical rush-hour period between 5:30 and 9:30 p.m.

Drive more slowly. Slow down and anticipate heavier than usual pedestrian traffic.

Turn lights on. Be sure to drive with your vehicle's full headlights on so you can spot children from greater distances.

## **Costumes with Safety in Mind**

Costumes should be flame retardant and bright enough to make children more visible.

Make costumes short enough to avoid tripping. Decorate costumes and

treat bags with retroreflective tape and stickers.

Dress children in shoes that fit. Wearing adult shoes can lead to falls.

Allow children to carry only flexible knives, swords or other props.

Avoid costumes made of flimsy material and outfits with big, baggy sleeves or billowing skirts. These are more likely to come in contact with an exposed flame, such as a candle, than tighter fitting costumes.

Apply face paint or cosmetics directly to the face. If a mask is worn, be certain it fits securely. Cut the eyeholes large enough for full vision.

For more tips on how to keep kids safe while walking on Halloween and throughout the year, visit

[www.usa.safekids.org/wtw/halloween2008.html](http://www.usa.safekids.org/wtw/halloween2008.html) .

Provided by Penn State

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