

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

October 20 2010, By Susan Rzucidlo

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. It's essential for parents to prepare their children properly to stay safe while trick-or-treating. Roughly four times as many children aged 5-14 are killed while walking on Halloween evening compared with other evenings of the year.

There are simple ways to keep you and your child safe on [Halloween](#). The excitement of the day can sometimes lead to more distractions and forgetting about being safe.

Tips for safe trick or treating

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 an adult, make sure they go in a group and have a predetermined route with good lighting. Parents also must 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. Plan a safe route ahead of time.
- 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 they 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.
- Make sure to carry a flashlight, glow stick or reflective tape on the costume so you and your child are more visible. Don't shine the flashlight at the driver.
- Remind your child to not go into any homes and to not cut through alleys or fields.
- Vandalism is against the law. Throwing eggs or doing other things that can damage a home is a crime, and don't think that you won't get caught.

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 5:30-9:30 p.m.

- Drive more slowly. Slow down and anticipate that children will be distracted and may be in the streets.
- Lights on. Be sure to drive with your full headlights on so you can spot children from greater distances.
- Do NOT drink and drive. Halloween week is one of the highest for driving under the influence arrests and alcohol-related crashes.
- Don't use a cell phone or other electronic devices that may distract you while driving. This is a good idea all the time, as many crashes are while the driver is texting or on the phone while driving.
- Don't pass vehicles that are stopped as they could be dropping off children.

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 retro reflective 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.

More information: For more tips on how to keep kids safe while walking on Halloween and throughout the year, visit www.usa.safekids.org

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