

Child safety expert gives Halloween safety tips

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(Medical Xpress) -- Halloween has become one of the most anticipated holidays for kids. For one night it is OK to be scared, free candy is everywhere and you can pretend to be someone or something completely different. Still, it's up to parents to make sure kids have a spook-tacular time and not a horrifying experience.

“[Kids](#) love [Halloween](#) and it's a great time to get outside and have some fun,” said Dr. Karen Judy, Loyola University Health System [child](#) safety expert and a professor in the Department of Pediatrics at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. “Some of the best ways to keep kids safe on Halloween is to create boundaries and talk to your kids. Make sure you know who your kids are with and where they are going.”

Though parents have heard it a million times, it is important to check all candy. This means:

Don't let kids eat candy while trick-or-treating. This will keep kids safe from eating candy whose package has been opened and possibly tampered. It will also limit the amount of sugar they eat. This is good advice for parents, too.

If in doubt, throw it out. Throw away any treat that is homemade by someone you don't know, a choking hazard or not completely wrapped. It's always better to be safe than sorry.

Make Halloween allergy-free. Another great reason to check candy is to ensure your child does not have an allergic reaction. Candy may not be well marked so, again, if in doubt, throw it out. If your child has a nut allergy, make sure hands are washed after trick-or-treating. This will help to remove any food residue that may be on the hands.

“The combination of excitement and sugar does not leave much room for judgment. Make sure you talk to your kids before the holiday and set guidelines. I can’t stress enough the importance of supervision,” Judy said.

Though supervision is universal for Halloween safety, she does offer some age-specific tips.

Young Children:

- Halloween can be scary, so talk to your kids about how this is pretend. Stay away from the scariest parts of Halloween like haunted houses.
- Make sure an adult is with your children. If they get scared while trick-or-treating, a mature adult is a comforting presence. Though older siblings can be great baby sitters, the excitement of Halloween can leave the little ones in the dust.
- Keep trick-or-treating short and close to home. This way you’ll have a better idea of who will be answering the door when your little ghost rings the bell. Also, little legs can get tired easily so make sure your child is wearing shoes that are good for walking.
- Make sure costumes are flame-resistant and fit appropriately to prevent falling. And masks are a bad idea because it interferes with vision and seeing cars. Paint your children’s faces to complete their costumes.

School-age and preteen:

- Though it’s always best to have an adult present, some kids believe it

limits the fun. Still, children should not cross the street without an adult until they are 10 years old. If your child is under 10, make sure there is an adult present.

- Do not let your child trick-or-treat alone. It is much safer to be with a group. Make sure the group stays close to home. If there is not a parent in the group, consider giving your child a cell phone to call for help if needed.
- Sticking to sidewalks, decorating costumes with reflective tape and carrying a flashlight can help prevent traffic accidents between cars and children. Again, masks are a bad idea.
- If your child's costume requires cosmetics, test a small area of skin to ensure there is no reaction before applying it to the rest of the face and/or body.

Teens:

- Make sure you know the group your teen will be with and where they are going.
- Try to avoid driving. Halloween is one of the most dangerous nights for driving. It's dark, people are dressed in dark costumes and kids are darting into the street. If possible, do not have your teen behind the wheel. If that is not an option, emphasize your driving safety rules.
- Plan something special at your house for them, like creating a haunted house or hosting a scary movie night.

“Halloween is a truly memorable time of year and so much fun. It's our job as parents to keep kids safe and help them truly enjoy this holiday,” Judy said.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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