

# Professor offers pandemic health advice for Halloween

October 4 2022, by Sharon Kennedy Wynne

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In 2020, we created chutes to send candy to trick-or-treaters at a distance. We canceled Halloween house parties. The theme parks put their scare actors behind hedges or up on platforms to frighten guests from a distance. Halloween stores sold loot scoop bags so kids could collect treats from the end of a long stick.

So how do we celebrate Halloween safely in 2022?

The past few years, University of South Florida public health professor Dr. Jay Wolfson has been called on for advice as Halloween approached and the pandemic weighed heavy on our minds.

This year, Wolfson said, the pandemic is now in a state they call "endemic," meaning the disease is still around but it's at a level that is not causing significant disruption in our daily lives.

"This is coming at the height of the flu season, so just recognize common sense," Wolfson said.

Because of easing health restrictions, attractions in Florida have moved toward more traditional operations for their Halloween haunts and separate-ticket parties. If you are more germophobic than you used to be, you can still enjoy them, Wolfson said.

Busch Gardens and Universal Orlando, with their super scary haunted houses, can be crowded places. Though mostly outside, there are some enclosed places such as trams for transportation and claustrophobic corners of a haunted maze.

Those with compromised immune systems are advised to wear masks in enclosed spaces, as are the unvaccinated. Numerous hand sanitizer stations remain a common sight at [theme parks](#).

Halloween also brings house parties and trick-or-treating with multiple little hands reaching into treat bowls.

By now it should be a habit to bring hand sanitizer, Wolfson said, and wash your hands often. Get vaccinated for both the flu and COVID-19, and stay home if you have any cold symptoms, he said.

"Last year we did notice a spike in infections from congested groups during Halloween," Wolfson said. "So treat it like you do influenza. Unlike [measles](#) and mumps where you get a lifetime protection from a shot, this is going to be a yearly vaccine that is part of the landscape. Protect yourself and if you have [cold symptoms](#), protect others by not spreading it."

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