

Three tips to avoid Halloween hand injuries

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There are plenty of frights to go around on Halloween, but a hand injury probably isn't one you'd expect.

"Interestingly, it's the fourth busiest holiday for hand injuries," says Dr. Sanj Kakar, a Mayo Clinic orthopedic hand and wrist surgeon.

Dr. Kakar says almost one-third of those Halloween hand injuries are among kids 10 to 14. And most of them happen when people are carving pumpkins.

"It's primarily stabbing injuries where the knife may slip, and, so, they can cut things like [tendons](#), which are the ropes that help move your hands," Dr. Kakar says. "But they can also break bones, and also they can burn themselves, as well, with candles."

But Dr. Kakar says most of the injuries are avoidable.

"A lot of people might just go to the kitchen and grab a sharp knife. But there's good studies out there showing that actual pumpkin-specific carving knives [are safer], [because] actually the [force](#) needed to injure yourself, is higher if you use one of those than if you use a standard knife," he says. "So I would use a pumpkin carving kit, No. 1."

No. 2, Dr. Kakar says, is to let [kids](#) handle designing the jack-o'-lantern, but make sure adults do all of the carving.

And No. 3, make sure you're always supporting the pumpkin with your noncutting hand.

"So if you're right-handed, use your left hand to support the pumpkin and carve from the top down as opposed to the bottom up," Dr. Kakar says. "It's very easy for the knife to slip and go into your [hand](#)."

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