

Halloween Safety Tips

Written by American Academy of Pediatrics

Thursday, 12 October 2006

Halloween is an exciting time of year for kids, and to help ensure they have a safe holiday, here are some tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

ALL DRESSED UP:

- Plan costumes that are bright and reflective. Make sure that shoes fit well and that costumes are short enough to prevent tripping, entanglement or contact with flame.
- Consider adding reflective tape or striping to costumes and Trick-or-Treat bags for greater visibility.
- Because masks can limit or block eyesight, consider non-toxic makeup and decorative hats as safer alternatives. Hats should fit properly to prevent them from sliding over eyes.
- When shopping for costumes, wigs and accessories look for and purchase those with a label clearly indicating they are flame resistant.
- If a sword, cane, or stick is a part of your child's costume, make sure it is not sharp or too long. A child may be easily hurt by these accessories if he stumbles or trips.
- Obtain flashlights with fresh batteries for all children and their escorts.
- Teach children how to call 9-1-1 (or their local emergency number) if they have an emergency or become lost.

CARVING A NICHE:

- Small children should never carve pumpkins. Children can draw a face with markers. Then parents can do the cutting.
- Votive candles are safest for candle-lit pumpkins.
- Lighted pumpkins should be placed on a sturdy table, away from curtains and other flammable objects, and should never be left unattended.

HOME SAFE HOME:

- To keep homes safe for visiting trick-or-treaters, parents should remove from the porch and front yard anything a child could trip over such as garden hoses, toys, bikes and lawn decorations.
- Parents should check outdoor lights and replace burned-out bulbs.
- Wet leaves should be swept from sidewalks and steps.
- Restrain pets so they do not inadvertently jump on or bite a trick-or-treater.

ON THE TRICK-OR-TREAT TRAIL:

- A parent or responsible adult should always accompany young children on their neighborhood rounds.
- If your older children are going alone, plan and review the route that is acceptable to you. Agree on a specific time when they should return home.
- Remind Trick-or-Treaters:
 - Stay in a group and communicate where they will be going.

- Carry a mobile phone for quick communication.
- Only go to homes with a porch light on.
- Remain on well-lit streets and always use the sidewalk.
- If no sidewalk is available, walk at the far edge of the roadway facing traffic.
- Never cut across yards or use alleys.
- Never enter a stranger's home or car for a treat.
- Only cross the street as a group in established crosswalks (as recognized by local custom).
- Don't assume the right of way. Motorists may have trouble seeing Trick-or-Treaters. Just because one car stops, doesn't mean others will!
- Law enforcement authorities should be notified immediately of any suspicious or unlawful activity.

HEALTHY HALLOWEEN:

- A good meal prior to parties and trick-or-treating will discourage youngsters from filling up on Halloween treats.
- Consider purchasing non-food treats for those who visit your home, such as coloring books or pens and pencils.
- Wait until children are home to sort and check treats. Though tampering is rare, a responsible adult should closely examine all treats and throw away any spoiled, unwrapped or suspicious items.
- Try to ration treats for the days following Halloween.