

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Halloween Hazards Lurk, so Have a Frightful Harvest Holiday, but Keep it Safe, IDPH Urges**

*If you are Sick, Skip Trick-or-treating and Stay Home*

**CHICAGO** – Halloween is time for spooky celebrations, but the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is advising Illinoisans to keep safety in mind and take some simple precautions to avoid any for real holiday horrors.

Trick-or-treaters who are feeling ill should get tested and stay home if sick, to avoid sharing any creepy contagions. Those giving out treats should wash hands frequently. Party hosts should include outdoor spaces if possible and review options for improving ventilation in their homes to keep germs from spreading. And the best protection from coughing and hacking hobgoblins like COVID-19 and the flu – protection that lasts through the fall and winter seasons - is to get fully vaccinated.

Other dangers lurk and threaten to cause havoc in various ways, including unsafe costumes, overdoing it on sweets and treats, carving pumpkins and setting up holiday decorations.

Here are additional Halloween safety tips offered by health and safety experts:

- Wear costumes with “flame resistant” on the label. If you make a DIY costume, use flame-resistant fabrics such as polyester or nylon.
- Wear bright, reflective costumes or add strips of reflective tape so you’ll be more visible when crossing streets.
- Wear makeup and hats rather than costume masks that can obscure your vision.
- Test the makeup you plan to use at least 24-48 hours in advance to avoid allergic reactions.
- Vibrantly colored makeup is popular at Halloween. Check [the FDA’s list of color additives](#) to see if the colors are FDA approved. If they aren’t approved for their intended use, don’t use them. This is especially important for colored makeup around the eyes.

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- Don't wear decorative (colored) contact lenses that appear to change how your eyes look due to the risk of eye injury unless you have seen an eye care professional for a proper fitting and been given instructions for how to use the lenses.

When it comes to enjoying Halloween treats and sweets, [the FDA offers the following nutritional and safety tips](#) for trick-or-treaters:

- Don't eat candy until it has been inspected at home.
- Eat a snack before heading out to avoid the temptation of nibbling on a treat before it has been inspected.
- In case of a food allergy, check the label to ensure the allergen isn't present. Tell children not to accept — or eat — anything that isn't commercially wrapped.
- Parents of very young children should remove any choking hazards such as gum, peanuts, hard candies, or small toys from the Halloween bags.
- Inspect commercially wrapped treats for signs of tampering, such as an unusual appearance or discoloration, tiny pinholes, or tears in wrappers. Throw away anything that looks suspicious.

The [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission \(CPSC\)](#) also reminds the public to beware of Halloween holiday hazards. Over the past three years, CPSC estimates that an annual average of 3,200 Halloween-related injuries were treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments.

Here's how the injuries break down:

- 55% were related to pumpkin carving;
- 25% were due to falls while putting up or taking down decorations, tripping on costumes or walking while trick-or-treating;
- 20% of the injuries included lacerations, ingestions and other injuries associated with costumes, pumpkins or decorations, and allergic reactions or rashes.

Among the injured, 54 percent were adults 18 years and over, 46 percent were under 18 years old, and about 10 percent of all injuries were to children 6 years old or younger.

Stay safe this Halloween by observing the following CPSC safety tips:

### **Pumpkin Carving:**

- Leave pumpkin carving to the adults. Child helpers can grab a spoon and scoop out the inside or use a marker to trace the design.
- When your jack-o'-lantern masterpiece is ready, use battery-operated lights or glow sticks rather than an open-flame candle.
- If using open-flame candles, keep them away from curtains, decorations and other combustibles that could catch fire.
- Never leave burning candles unattended.



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- Check out the CPSC's Halloween Safety DIY video: <https://youtu.be/HF3as5MGlzY>

### **Decorating:**

- Prevent fires by using battery-operated lights and glow sticks instead of candles.
- Pay attention to placement of decorations. To help prevent falls, remove obstacles from lawns, steps and porches when expecting trick-or-treaters.
- Use [CPSC's ladder safety tips](#) to prevent injuries while putting up or taking down decorations.
- Indoors or outside, only use lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory. Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Discard damaged sets.

For more Halloween Safety tips and resources, check out this site from the [Illinois Poison Center](#).

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