

Daily Union Article
Saturday, October 28
Halloween Safety

Sometimes I wonder if some of the topics I write my articles on are a bit redundant. However, when it comes to the safety of my own children, I know I have to repeat my warnings and safety speeches regularly. Participating in Halloween festivities is a favorite tradition of my children and many other children across America. It is important to talk to kids ever year about being safe while enjoying the fun.

In the spirit of ensuring the safety of our community's children, I am repeating my safety talk by passing along the following safety tips release by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) earlier this week:

"Whether you're a ghost or zombie, vampire or witch, poor costume choices—including decorative (colored) contact lenses and flammable costumes—and face paint allergies can cause injuries that haunt you long after Halloween.

Enjoy a safe and happy Halloween by following these guidelines from FDA, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Wear costumes that say "flame resistant" on the label. If you make your 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; make sure the costumes aren't so long that you're in danger of tripping.
- Wear makeup and hats rather than masks that can obscure your vision.
- Test the makeup you plan to use in advance. Put a small amount on the arm of the person who will be wearing it. If a rash, redness, swelling, or other signs of irritation develop where the makeup was applied, that's a sign of a possible allergy.
- Vibrantly colored makeup is popular at Halloween. Check FDA's list of color additives to see if the colors are FDA approved. (You can find the list at <https://www.fda.gov/> - search for "Color Additives Permitted for Use in Cosmetics.") If they aren't approved for their intended use, don't use them. This is especially important for colored makeup around the eyes.
- Don't wear decorative (colored) contact lenses unless you have seen an eye care professional for a proper fitting and been given instructions for how to use the lenses."

I wear contact lenses nearly every day. Without corrective lenses, I have to hold a book no more than 4 inches away from my face in order to read the words. I have never worn contacts for cosmetic reasons but can see the importance of considering

eye safety recommendations for specialty contact lenses that are more popular during the Halloween season. The FDA offers some specific safety suggestions regarding these types of lenses in order to prevent damage to the eye:

Eye Safety: FDA is discouraging consumers from using illegal decorative (colored) contact lenses. These are contact lenses that have not been approved by FDA for safety and effectiveness. Consumers should only use brand name contact lenses from well-known contact lens companies.

If you have never worn contact lenses before, Halloween should not be the first time you wear them. Experts warn that buying any kind of contact lenses—which are medical devices and regulated as such—without an examination and a prescription from an eye care professional can cause serious eye disorders and infections, which may lead to permanent vision loss. Despite the fact that it's illegal to sell decorative contact lenses without a valid prescription, FDA says the lenses are sold on the Internet and in retail shops and salons—particularly around Halloween.

The decorative lenses make the wearer's eyes appear to glow in the dark, create the illusion of vertical "cat eyes," or change the wearer's eye color.

Although unauthorized use of decorative contact lenses is a concern year-round, Halloween is the time when people may be inclined to use them, perhaps as costume accessories. When they are bought and used without a valid prescription, without the involvement of a qualified eye care professional, or without appropriate follow-up care, it can lead to significant risks of eye injuries, including blindness."

Source: <https://www.fda.gov/HalloweenSafety>: Costumes, Candy, and Colored Contact Lenses.

I am a firm believer in the saying "It takes a village to raise a child." Unfortunately, 12% of children five years of age or younger are permitted to trick-or-treat alone. Our village needs to protect these young and vulnerable children. Please take the time to be a contributing member of your village to help ensure the safety of all the children who will be out on the streets this Halloween. Keep your outside lights on as well as your eyes and ears open.

On average, children are more than twice as likely to be hit by a car and killed on Halloween as on any other day of the year. Sending your children out to trick or treat with reflective tape on their shoes and back is an expensive way to protect them from automobile traffic. Adding a small flashlight or glow stick to their protective gear can help them see better and be more easily seen by drivers.

It takes everyone's effort to keep our community safe on Halloween and throughout the year. For more information on family safety throughout the year, contact me at the Geary County K-State Research and Extension Office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!