

The Daily Union  
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Title: Trick & Treat Safety Tips

Did you know that children are twice as likely to be hit by a car on Halloween than on any other night of the year? It's a scary statistic, but there are easy steps to take to keep your little ghosts and goblins safe as they head out to trick or treat.

**Increase visibility:** Take time to apply reflective tape or stickers to your child's costume and treat bag. The cutest little witches and ninjas in their dark costumes blend into the night and can be very hard to see. According to the first ever study on Halloween safety conducted by Safe Kids World Wide, only 18 percent of parents apply reflective tape to their children's costumes. This is an easy and inexpensive step to insure that drivers see your children.

**Light the way:** Provide all trick or treaters with flashlights or glow sticks to both increase their visibility, as well as to light their way through the neighborhood. Take time to check outdoor lights at your home prior to Halloween and replace any burnt out bulbs. Light the path or sidewalk to your front door and remove potential obstructions such as hoses and lawn decorations. Avoid the use of lit candles in luminaries if costumes can be flammable.

**Be scary and safe:** Wear well-fitting costumes and shoes to avoid trips and falls. Select face-paint or makeup instead of masks. Masks can slip and obstruct children's vision. Choose soft, flexible swords, knives and other props. Choose wigs and other accessories that are clearly marked as being flame-retardant. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Halloween Health and Safety Tips recommends testing makeup in a small area prior to Halloween to look for any potential skin reaction prior to a full face application on Halloween night.

**Don't go alone:** Did you know that 12 percent of children ages 5 and under are allowed to trick or treat alone? This is not a safe or a recommended practice. Children 12 and under should always trick or treat with an adult. Older children and teens that are mature enough to be unsupervised should stay together in groups and stay in well-lit and familiar areas. Teach children to only go to homes with the front porch light on and to never enter a home or car for a treat.

**Walk safely:** Walk from house to house; do not run. Put down the smartphone, and pay attention as you trick or treat. Cross at cross walks or corners and remember to look both ways. Teach children how to walk safely by staying on the sidewalk when one is available, or walk facing traffic and as far to the curb as possible. Children need to be on the lookout for drivers and likewise, drivers need to look out for children.

**Be a safe driver:** When driving on Halloween, keep an eye out for children. They are excited and will move unpredictably. The most common time to trick or treat is between 5:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., so be especially on the look out during this time frame. Turn your headlights on early, avoid distractions while driving and pay close attention for all the goblins and ghouls that are out and about!

**Eat with caution:** Do not eat homemade food from strangers. Eat only factory wrapped treats, and inspect for tampering before eating. Hard-candies and other hard to chew candies can cause a choking hazard to small children. Review labels for potential allergens or cross contaminants as needed. Portion out the amount of treats children are allowed to eat. In addition to causing digestive discomfort, eating an excess amount of sweets can lead to tooth decay. It should be no surprise that November 1st is National Brush Day, so remember to brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, and after eating Halloween candy.

Halloween festivities are not exclusive to children. Many adults also choose to join in the fun with their children with festivities at home and in their neighborhood. Safety remains an important part of having fun. Consider these tips to help make the festivities fun and safe for everyone:

- ✓ Provide healthier treats for your guests such as low-calorie treats and drinks. Add healthy alternatives by offering a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Use party games and trick-or-treat time as an opportunity for kids to get out of the cold and get their daily dose of 60 minutes of physical activity.
- ✓ Be sure walking areas and stairs are well-lit and free of obstacles that could cause someone to fall. Placing reflective tape on outside stairs is another safety feature you can add to your home as children come and go from your front door.
- ✓ Keep candle-lit jack o'lanterns and luminaries away from doorsteps, walkways, landings, and curtains. Place them on sturdy tables, keep them out of the reach of pets and small children, and never leave them unattended.
- ✓ Adults and parents should adopt a "neighborhood watch" approach on Halloween. Having responsible adults out and about watching out for the safety of all children is a great way to keep the neighborhood a safe place for children to be.

Taking time to plan ahead for Halloween can make the difference between a fun, spooky evening with your children and a scary, potentially dangerous time. So, double check costumes for good fit, apply reflective tape, check batteries in the flashlights and review the safety rules before you head out for a fun-filled evening of trick or treating! Have a Happy and Safe Halloween from K-State Research & Extension! Until next time, keep living resourcefully!