



# FACT SHEET

## Halloween Related Injury & Prevention



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
Pro Consumer Safety

Fall 2018

### Epidemiology

An estimated 40 million children will participate in Halloween trick-or-treat celebrations on Halloween night.<sup>1</sup> Halloween decorating in the home, ranks second to Christmas, with Americans spending \$6.9 billion on Halloween decorations and costumes.<sup>2</sup> With the increased numbers of those decorating homes and participating in Halloween night activities, reflects the rise in injury.

**Fatalities:** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention the number of pedestrian related fatalities among children increases significantly on Halloween. Whereas on Halloween night children ages 5-14 are 4.5 times more likely to be killed by a motor vehicle than any other night of the year. These crashes occur primarily between 6-7pm. Both darkness and speed contribute to the elevated risk of a pedestrian fatality at an increase of seven times greater on high-speed roads, five times on urban side streets and three times for slower local roads.<sup>3</sup>

**Hospitalizations:** Halloween also includes the highest number of childhood Emergency Department (ED) visits compared to Christmas and July 4<sup>th</sup>. Ages include 14 and younger with two-thirds being boys and 96.9% are treat and release.<sup>4</sup> According to the American Academy of Pediatrics the most common Halloween related-injury that bring children to the hospital include: 1) motor vehicle/pedestrian crashes, 2) falls (resulting in eye injuries from sharp objects, hand fractures and tripping from costumes),<sup>5</sup> and 3) burns from flammable costumes.<sup>6</sup> Other common injury risks among children occur before Halloween night. These include cuts and lacerations to the hands from pumpkin carving<sup>7</sup> and home fires/burns from flame lighted pumpkins and decorative electrical lighting.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services. *Number of U.S. Kids Injured on Halloween Is Scary. 2011*

<sup>2</sup> National Retail Federation

<sup>3</sup> Transportation Research Institute, University of Michigan, October 2005

<sup>4</sup> D'Ippolito A, Collins CL, Comstock RD. *Epidemiology of pediatric holiday-related injuries presenting to US emergency departments. Pediatrics. 2010 May;125(5):931-7*

<sup>5</sup> American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

<sup>6</sup> Wyckoff AS. Halloween's most common injuries have nothing to do with candy. *AAP News. 2006;10:41*

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

<sup>8</sup> Electrical Safety Foundation International

## DECORATING SAFETY TIPS

Pumpkin Carving:

- Small children should never carve pumpkins
- Have children draw faces with markers and have the adult do the cutting
- Children can assist in removing the seeds and poking out the portions that the adult has cut out

Displaying a pumpkin:

- Battery operated candles are safer than flame lighted candles for pumpkins
- Lighted pumpkins should be placed on a sturdy table, away from curtains and other flammable objects, and should never be left unattended

Decorating your home:

- Check outdoor lights and replace burned-out bulbs
- Wet leaves should be swept from sidewalks and steps
- Do not overload electrical outlets with holiday lighting
- Keep lighted decorations away from drapes, decorations, flammable materials or areas where children will be standing or walking.

On Halloween night:

- Remove items that a child could trip over such as garden hoses, toys, bikes and lawn decorations
- If you participate in Trick-or-treating at your home and give out treats, leave a porch light on for trick-or-treaters

## TRICK-OR-TREAT PLANNING TIPS

All ages:

- Use bright and reflective costumes. Make sure shoes fit well and costumes are short enough to prevent tripping, entanglement or contact with flames. Costume materials must be flame proof
- Add reflective tape or striping to costumes and Trick-or-Treat bags for greater visibility
- Never use fake (or real) knives, guns, or swords that look real. If props are used, make sure they **do not look real**, and are soft and flexible to prevent injury
- When shopping for costumes, wigs and accessories, make sure these are “flame resistant”
- Because masks can limit or block vision, consider using non-toxic face paint or makeup as a safer alternative. Home food colorings are not recommended due to difficulty in removing
- If makeup is swallowed call Poison Control at 800-222-1222 (USA) or 800-268-9017 (Canada);
- Carry flashlights with fresh batteries (or hand crank-no battery). Use only battery powered lanterns or chemical light sticks.

Children 12 and younger:

- Have an adult with them when going door to door of a house
- Secure emergency identification (name, address, or phone) discreetly on Halloween clothing or bracelet in case a child is separated from the adult
- Remember to review with your children the “Stop-Drop-Roll” drill, in case their clothes ever catch fire.

Children 13 and older:

- Adults should plan and review an acceptable route. Choose a familiar neighborhood
- Only visit homes that have a porch light on
- Instruct your child to never enter a home, apartment building, or car to get a treat
- Carry a mobile phone for communication
- Agree on a specific time when they are to return home; and 6. Openly discuss appropriate and inappropriate behavior at Halloween time.

## HALLOWEEN NIGHT TRICK-OR-TREAT SAFETY

**Before going out:**

- Consider purchasing non-food treats for Trick-or-Treaters
- Eat a good meal before Trick-or-Treating so children do not eat Halloween treats
- Remind children and escorts (an adult or 13 years of age or older) to not eat any items until after and an adult checks their treats
- Remind children and escorts to never run between parked vehicles and cross streets at crosswalk
- Remind children and escorts to not enter homes, apartments or car of strangers
- Again, remind children and escorts of the route and behavior which is acceptable to you
- Remind them of a specific time when they are to return home
- Prepare household pets for an evening of frightful sights and sounds. Be sure that all dogs and cats are wearing collars and proper identification tags
- Drivers must remain cautious and drive slowly

**During trick-or-treating:**

- A parent or responsible adult should always accompany young children on their neighborhood rounds. Remind Trick-or-Treaters:
- To use flashlights so they can be seen by others
  - Stay in a group and know where they will be
  - Only go to homes with a porch light on
  - Walk on sidewalks that have well-lit streets
  - If no sidewalk is available, walk at the farthest edge of the roadway facing traffic
  - Never cut across lawns or use alleys
  - Never go into a stranger's home or car for a treat
  - Obey all traffic and pedestrian rules
  - Always walk. Never run when crossing a street
  - Only cross the street at crosswalks
  - off any mask or item that can block vision before crossing a street, driveway or alley
  - Drivers may have trouble seeing Trick-or-Treaters. If one car stops, doesn't mean other cars will
  - Never eat unwrapped food items or drink offered beverages
  - If you see suspicious activity call police

**After:**

- Once children return home, sort and check treats. Tampering is rare, but a responsible adult should closely examine all treats and throw away any spoiled, unwrapped or suspicious items. Remember, when in doubt ~ throw it out!
- Try to portion treats for the days after Halloween
- Make sure items that can cause choking (such as hard candies), are given only to those of an appropriate age

**Resources (including downloadable educational materials)**

Pro Consumer Safety provides downloadable educational materials, available for printing and distribution to help increase awareness, prevent injury and promote healthy lifestyles. Information and downloadable materials are available at the following links:

- Website-Pro Consumer Safety/Pro Car Seat Safety: <http://www.procarseatsafety.com/halloween.html>
- Downloadable materials: <http://www.procarseatsafety.com/downloadable-materials-halloween-safety.html>
- Social Media: Halloween Safety Materials
  - Pinterest: <http://www.pinterest.com/proconsumersafe/halloween-safety/>
  - Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ProConsumerSafe>

**Questions**

Call 323-491-6197 or email [Media@ProConsumerSafety.com](mailto:Media@ProConsumerSafety.com)