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Halloween Safety

Updated:

October 2011

# IT'S YOUR HEALTH

*This article was produced in collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada.*

## Halloween Safety

### THE ISSUE

Halloween is a time of great excitement for children but the thrills can make them forget some of the safety rules they have learned. It is important to keep your child's safety in mind when planning [costumes](#), [decorations](#), [treats](#) and [activities](#) on the special day itself. Lit jack-o-lanterns, flimsy or complicated costumes, street traffic and unsafe treats are just some of the risks. With some simple precautions, you can make sure that Halloween is a safe and happy experience for the whole family.



### SAFETY TIPS

#### Costumes

- Cold and wet weather can be harmful to children. Choose costumes that can be worn over warm clothing, but are not baggy enough to trip over.

- Flammable materials, flowing skirts, baggy sleeves and over-sized costumes can all be hazards around candles or flames. Avoid costumes with baggy sleeves or flowing skirts and look for costumes, beards and wigs that are labelled "Flame-Resistant." Nylon or heavyweight polyester costumes are best. Remember, "Flame-Resistant" does not mean fire-proof.
- Pick brightly coloured costumes that can be clearly seen by motorists. Add reflective tape to the costume to increase visibility.
- Use make-up or face paint instead of masks. Improperly fitted masks can interfere with your child's vision or breathing. If you do choose a mask, make sure it fits properly and allows them to see and breathe properly.



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- Toy weapons such as swords, knives and other accessories can cause injuries so make sure they are always made of flexible material.
- Coloured [contact lenses](#) that change eye colour should be avoided because they can cause injury to a child's eyes.

### Decorations

- To avoid injuries, let children draw a face or design on the pumpkin and then have an adult carve it.



- [Candles](#), jack-o-lanterns, [lighters and matches](#) are all fire hazards. Instead of candles, consider using a small flashlight or battery candle to light your jack-o-lantern. Always keep candles, matches and lighters in a place that children cannot reach.
- Avoid using Halloween candles with multiple wicks. They can produce a single high flame or several large flames that create intense heat and may ignite nearby materials like curtains and window sills.
- Indoor and outdoor [decorative lights](#) can be fire hazards. Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections. Make sure they are certified by a recognized

organization like the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or the Underwriters' Laboratory of Canada (ULC). Do not overload extension cords.

- Make your home safe for ghouls and goblins by removing objects around the outside of your house that could cause children to trip or fall. Turn on your outside lights so that children know they can visit.
- Keep pets inside and away from trick or treaters and lit candles, especially if they are easily frightened or overly excitable.

### Trick or treating



- Go [trick or treating](#) with your children each year until they are old enough to go with a friend. Children who are alone are vulnerable to injury and bullying by older children or may encounter a predator. When they are old enough, make sure they go with a friend or in a group, and know the routes they will be taking. You can also follow along at a distance to keep an eye on them.

- Tell your children to walk, not run from house to house and to stay on the sidewalk or at the side of the road facing traffic. They should only cross the road at the corner and look both ways before crossing. If you are driving on Halloween, be aware of children, drive slowly and enter and exit driveways and alleyways with caution.
- Give each child a flashlight to carry, to make them more visible to motorists and others.
- Tell your children to stay in well-lit areas and only visit homes that have their outside lights turned on. Make sure they know never to go inside homes or cars.
- Take a backpack along, to empty goodies into if the loot bag becomes too heavy.
- Tell your children not to eat any [goodies](#) until you have looked them over. Throw out any treats that are not commercially wrapped, have loose or torn wrappers or have holes in the wrappers. If you suspect tampering with any of the treats, notify the police. Serve dinner before your children go out, so that they will be less tempted to eat goodies along the way.







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- Be cautious about giving children any treats that could be potential choking hazards. Some treats such as chewy candies, peanuts and hard candies could be a choking hazard.
- Check toys or novelty items for small parts. If they do have small parts, do not let children under three years of age play with them.
- You might want to consider an alternative to sugar-based treats, like sugarless gum. Stickers or multi-coloured pencils can be a nice replacement for traditional treats. Ask your children for suggestions.
- For diabetic children, monitor the treats so that they fit into their specialized meal plan. Leftover treats can be traded with other children or given away. Treats may also cause severe side effects (adverse reactions) in children who have allergies or sensitivities.

## THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S ROLE

Health Canada works closely with industry, partners and stakeholders to protect consumers from product-related hazards and to promote the safe use of products through the *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act*.

Health Canada also establishes regulations and standards relating to the safety and nutritional quality of foods sold in Canada. Through inspection and

enforcement activities, the [Canadian Food Inspection Agency](#) verifies that food sold in Canada meets Health Canada's requirements.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

To report concerns about consumer products visit the Consumer Product Safety [regional product safety offices](#) website at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/contact/cps-spc/hecs-dgsesc/psa-bsp-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/contact/cps-spc/hecs-dgsesc/psa-bsp-eng.php) or call 1-866-662-0666. Calls will be routed to the nearest regional Product Safety Office.

- **Have a Safe and Spooky Halloween** at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/securit/season-saison/hal/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/securit/season-saison/hal/index-eng.php)
- **Costumes and Dress-Up** at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/child-enfant/access/costumes-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/child-enfant/access/costumes-eng.php)
- **Children's Jewellery** at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/child-enfant/access/jewel-bij-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/child-enfant/access/jewel-bij-eng.php)

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- Cosmetics and Personal Care Products at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/cosmet-person/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/cosmet-person/index-eng.php)
- Halloween Food Safety Tips at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/kitchen-cuisine/halloween-safety-salubrite-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/kitchen-cuisine/halloween-safety-salubrite-eng.php)
- *It's Your Health* – Candle Safety at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/candle-bougie-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/candle-bougie-eng.php)
- *It's Your Health* – Contact Lenses at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/med/lenses-lentilles-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/med/lenses-lentilles-eng.php)
- Canadian Paediatric Society, Halloween Safety : Tips for Families at: [www.caringforkids.cps.ca/keepkidssafe/halloweensafety.htm](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/keepkidssafe/halloweensafety.htm)

- Safe Kids Canada – Halloween Safety Tips at: [www.safekidscanada.ca/parents/safety-information/pedestrian-safety/halloween-safety/halloween-safety-tips.aspx](http://www.safekidscanada.ca/parents/safety-information/pedestrian-safety/halloween-safety/halloween-safety-tips.aspx)

## FOR INDUSTRY AND PROFESSIONALS

- Health Canada's consumer product safety web section at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/index-eng.php)
- Health Canada's food and nutrition web section at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index-eng.php)
- The Canadians Food Inspection Agency at: [www.inspection.gc.ca/english/toce.shtml](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/toce.shtml)

## RELATED RESOURCES

- For safety information about food, health and consumer products, visit the *Healthy Canadians* website at: [www.healthycanadians.gc.ca](http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca)
- For more articles on health and safety issues go to the *It's Your Health* web section at: [www.health.gc.ca/iyh](http://www.health.gc.ca/iyh)

You can also call toll free at 1-866-225-0709 or TTY at 1-800-267-1245\*

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