

Five Considerations for State & City Health Departments Seeking to Create a Safe & Fun Halloween

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With the appropriate guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state and local health departments across the country, we can prioritize safety and public health while at the same time allowing American families to celebrate Halloween during the month of October. The approach outlined below provides practical steps and ideas to follow that allow Halloween to be celebrated safely while still having fun given that there will be regional differences across the country. The key is to start planning now.

COVID-19 has overwhelmed almost every aspect of our lives. As hard as it has been for adults, arguably it has been harder for our children, both mentally and physically. Halloween does not have to be controversial. It is one of the biggest events of the year for families. At a time when nothing seems to be normal because of COVID-19, parents desperately want something to be fun and relatively normal for their kids. Surveys have shown that most parents want their kids to celebrate Halloween. Therefore, the more appropriate question is not whether to celebrate Halloween, but how can we make it as safe as possible for everyone? What follows are a few ideas to help make this possible:

1. Halloween is traditionally an outdoor holiday and the one time of the year when kids want to wear a mask. This is the year to get creative with face coverings. This is not the year to buck tradition by holding large indoor events, including parties. After all, proper ventilation and airflow are rarely an issue when outside. Work with your child to think of ways to integrate clever, while still protective, face coverings into their Halloween costume. Consider holding a small outdoor gathering of children with required physical distancing in the yard or elsewhere in the neighborhood. Even a small pageant or parade can be held safely outdoors if six feet of physical distancing is maintained.
2. Physical distancing is just as important during Halloween as it is during the rest of the year to prevent the spread of COVID-19. But that doesn't mean kids have to be socially distant if they can stay at least six feet apart.
3. Trick-or-treating can safely be done at households you know and can alert ahead of time so that adequate distancing is practiced. Your child gets to show off their costume to neighbors, relatives, and friends. And the treats can even be placed outside beforehand so your child doesn't need to come in direct contact with the people inside.
4. Although there is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted by food or food packaging, personal hygiene is still important during Halloween. Bring hand sanitizer if attending an outdoor event or going trick-or-treating. Use it frequently to keep your child's hands clean, including before opening a package.
5. This year, it's more important than ever that any treats you distribute or your child receives are packaged and not loose or open. If you venture out on Halloween night, bring along a package of disinfectant wipes for added peace of mind.