



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DHMH Issues Tips for Halloween Safety

Basic guidelines can help prevent most Halloween-related injuries

BALTIMORE, MD (October 28, 2005) -- As children put together their costumes and prepare to canvass their neighborhoods dressed as witches and firefighters in search of treats, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) reminds parents of some basic Halloween safety tips.

“Halloween is wonderful fun for children, and we want to keep it that way,” said DHMH Secretary S. Anthony McCann. “We need to make sure children are protected from injury and harm.”

Walking on Halloween evening, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, kills roughly four times as many children aged five to 14, as well as injuring many more, when compared to other evenings of the year. Many parents overestimate children’s street-crossing skills. For example, young children may lack the physical ability to cross a street quickly, and small size limits their visibility to drivers. Most Halloween-related injuries can be prevented by following some basic guidelines.

Halloween Safety Tips:

Parents can help prevent children from getting injured at Halloween by following these safety tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Safety Council.

Children should --

- * Go only to familiar, well-lit houses and stay on porches rather than enter houses.
- * Travel in small groups and be accompanied by an adult.
- * Know their phone number and carry coins for emergency telephone calls.
- * Have their names and addresses attached to their costumes.
- * Bring treats home before eating them so parents can inspect them.
- * Use costume knives, swords and wands that are flexible, not rigid or sharp.

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Halloween safety tips, page two

When walking in neighborhoods, children should --

- * Use flashlights, stay on sidewalks, and avoid crossing yards.
- * Cross streets at the corner, use crosswalks (where they exist), and do not cross between parked cars.
- * Look left, right, and left again before crossing the street.
- * Stop at all corners and stay together in a group while crossing.
- * Wear clothing that is bright, reflective, and flame retardant.
- * Consider using face paint instead of a mask. (Masks can obstruct a child's vision.)
- * Avoid wearing hats, wigs, and scarves that will slide over their eyes.
- * Avoid wearing long, baggy, or loose costumes or oversized shoes (to prevent tripping).

Parents and adults should --

- * Supervise the outing for children under age 12.
- * Establish a curfew (a return time) for older children.
- * Prepare homes for trick-or-treaters by clearing porches, lawns, and sidewalks, and by placing jack-o-lanterns away from doorways and landings.
- * Avoid giving choking hazards as treats to young children -- such as gum, peanuts, hard candies, or small toys.
- * Inspect all candy for signs of tampering before children eat it.

Parents and adults should ensure the safety of pedestrian trick-or-treaters --

- * Make sure children under age 12 are supervised as they cross the street.
- * Drive slowly.
- * Watch for children in the street and on medians.
- * Exit driveways and alleyways carefully.
- * Have children get out of cars on the curb side, not on the traffic side.

And a few tips about pumpkins --

- * Carve pumpkins on stable, flat surfaces with good lighting.
- * Have children draw a face on the outside of the pumpkin, then parents should do the cutting.
- * Place lighted pumpkins away from curtains and other flammable objects, and do not leave lighted pumpkins unattended.

Remember, Halloween is a time for fun and safety.

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