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Tricks and Tips for a Safe Halloween

Keep those little ghosts and goblins injury-free with these timely tips

ROSEMONT, IL – BOO! It’s nearly time for Halloween! Trick-or-treating, wearing costumes, and carving pumpkins are all part of the fun for kids of all ages. However, many of these activities also offer potential for injury, the [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](#) (AAOS) suggests that Halloween-goers take the following steps to stay safe.

Potential injuries:

- Ill-fitting masks and costumes, as well as walking in unfamiliar areas in the dark, can lead to [fractures](#), dislocations, sprains, contusions, abrasions and head trauma from trips and falls.
- Pumpkin-carving can result in serious lacerations to the hand and also injuries to bones and tendons, if certain precautions are not taken.

“When children get excited about a holiday that involves candy, they may be less cautious than usual,” says orthopaedic surgeon Ronald Delanois, MD, spokesperson for the AAOS and member of the Academy’s Leadership Fellows Program. “Also, Halloween tends to encourage unruly behavior, so parents and other caregivers need to be especially vigilant to ensure that kids follow basic safety guidelines whether they are pumpkin carving or trick-or-treating.”

The AAOS offers the following tips to help ensure an injury-free Halloween:

Pumpkin-carving

- When carving pumpkins, use specifically designed carving knives, no kitchen knives.
 - Carving knives are less likely to get stuck in the thick pumpkin tissue. (Injuries can occur when a carver tries to yank the stuck knife out.)
- Never let children carve pumpkins.
 - Adults carving pumpkins should remember to always cut in small, controlled strokes, away from themselves.
 - Carving knives should be kept in a clean, dry, well-lit area.
 - Any moisture on the tools, hands, or table can cause the knife to slip, leading to injuries.
- Should an individual cut a finger or hand while carving pumpkins, elevate the hand above the heart and apply direct pressure to the wound with a clean cloth to stop the bleeding.
 - If continuous pressure does not slow or stop the bleeding after 15 minutes, an emergency room visit may be necessary.
 - If there is any numbness in the fingers and or there is an inability to move the fingers, then the individual should go to the emergency room.

Costumes

- Halloween costumes should be light and bright, so children are clearly visible to motorists and other pedestrians.
 - Trim costumes and bags with reflective tape.
- Make sure children wear flame-resistant costumes that fit properly.
 - Costumes that are too long may cause kids to trip and fall.
- Children should wear sturdy, comfortable and slip-resistant shoes.
- Masks and hats can impair a child's vision, so secure hats well and consider using face makeup instead of masks.

Trick-or-Treating

- When trick-or-treating, children should stay in familiar neighborhoods and be accompanied by an adult at all times.
- Children must walk on sidewalks and never cut across yards or driveways.
 - They should also obey all traffic signals and remain in designated crosswalks when crossing the street.
- Trick-or-treaters should only approach houses that are well lit.
 - Both children and parents should carry flashlights to see and be seen.
- Consider skipping the door-to-door trick-or-treating and attend a neighborhood Halloween party instead.
- Examine all treats for tampering or other unsafe conditions before allowing the children to eat them.

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