

Halloween is nearly upon us. Many homes have pumpkins adorning their front steps and children planning the route that will let them accumulate as much candy as possible in their bags while trick or treating. Most of us grew up believing that the biggest threat to our Halloween safety was dealt with when mom or dad looked through our candy to make sure there weren't any needles, razors, or poison in them. There is nothing wrong with looking over Halloween candy for anything that looks out of the ordinary and throwing these outliers away to be on the safe side. However, there are real dangers associated with Halloween that parents and children need to consider. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, "the most common reasons kids visit the hospital on Halloween are eye injuries from sharp objects, burns from flammable costumes, and injuries from collisions with vehicles."

Children's costumes have come a long way over the years, but parents should be alert for a few things when it comes to picking out a costume. Many injuries are caused by ill-fitting costumes that leave the child vulnerable to trips and falls. Make sure costumes fit well, allow freedom of movement, and provide adequate vision. Look over the child's costume with the understanding that they will be walking in the dark by homes with jack-o-lanterns containing candles and perhaps small recreational fires. Ensure that the child's costume is not going to easily catch fire if they encounter these sources of open flame, cause them to fall into fixed objects, or perhaps make them trip down a flight of stairs. Make sure the child can see well to the front and sides so as to be safe when crossing streets. Halloween is often a busy time with children and vehicles sharing the roadways. According to the organization Safe Kids USA, children are more than twice as likely to be killed by a car while walking on Halloween night than at any other time of the year. Make sure your children are watching for cars and crossing streets carefully. Finally, ensure that your child has adequate supervision for their age and maturity. Children need to have someone with them who is alert for potential dangers while they are focused on gathering their goodies.

Trick-or-treat outings can be a fun and safe time for children with a little bit of planning and forethought. For those families who would like to celebrate Halloween in a more structured environment, there are many local trunk-or-treat or other organized events happening that provide an alternative to neighborhood trick-or-treating. Whatever choice you make, make sure that your child's safety is the first stop on your route.