

Halloween Fun *Without the Frights*

Trick-or-Treat Safety Tips

Halloween is one of those magical nights when neighbourhoods come alive. Front porches glow with jack-o'-lanterns, sidewalks fill with superheroes, witches and tiny dinosaurs, and children discover just how much candy can fit into one bucket.

A little preparation can help make sure the evening's surprises are all of the fun variety. Whether you're heading out with young trick-

or-treaters, handing out treats at home or driving through the neighbourhood, a few simple precautions can help everyone enjoy a happy and safe Halloween.

Safety Before Spooky: Be Seen!

Dark costumes may look fantastic, but they can make trick-or-treaters difficult for drivers to spot. Adding reflective tape, glow sticks or LED lights to costumes and treat bags can improve visibility without ruining the effect. A flashlight is another useful addition, especially on darker residential streets.

Also, ensure everyone's costume fits properly. Long capes, swirly dresses and oversized shoes can become tripping hazards, particularly when children are racing toward the next front door and fuelled by excitement. Masks should allow kids a clear view in every direction; face paint or makeup can sometimes be an easier alternative.

Make the Journey Part of the Plan

Before heading out, choose a familiar route, and remind everyone to stay on the sidewalks and to cross streets only at designated crossings or intersections whenever possible. For the many North Shore Neighbourhoods without sidewalks, always walk on the left side of the road, staying as close to the edge as you safely can and avoid walking side by side in groups that spill onto the road. Form a single-file line along the edge of the roadway.

Even on quiet neighbourhood streets, stop and look carefully before crossing rather than assuming a driver has seen you.

Younger children should always trick-or-treat with an adult, while children who are independent enough to venture out without supervision should travel in a group and have an agreed-upon route and return time. A charged cellphone can also help everyone stay connected.

Drivers, Expect the Unexpected

Driving at Halloween requires extra patience behind the wheel. Children can be excited, distracted and unpredictable. Another decorated house, or a friend waiting across the street, can be all it takes for an energetic sprint into the roadway to override those road safety lessons.

Slow down in residential areas, pay close attention around parked vehicles and driveways, and be prepared for pedestrians to appear unexpectedly. If you're backing out of your driveway, take extra time to check your surroundings, and then check them again, just in case!

Keep Home Sweet Home Safe

If you're welcoming trick-or-treaters, give your front walkway a quick safety check before the doorbell starts ringing. Clear away hoses, garden tools, wet leaves and anything else that could cause a fall. Keep steps and pathways well lit and pets safely secured away from the steady stream of costumed visitors.

Battery-operated candles are a great option for jack-o'-lanterns and decorations, particularly when flowing costumes and excited children will be nearby.

Save Some Treats for Later

It can be difficult to convince an enthusiastic trick-or-treater to wait, but it's a good idea for an adult to check treats before children dig in. Discard anything that is unwrapped, opened or looks unusual, and be mindful of food allergies.

Most importantly, Halloween should be fun. With a little planning, some extra visibility and plenty of attention from adults and drivers, the neighbourhood can concentrate on the important things: creative costumes, friendly doorstep greetings and the age-old question of just how many treats count as "one more."

■ By Patricia Barnes



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