

Tips For A Healthy Halloween

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O'FALLON – This Halloween, HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital is recommending parents take precautions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Although trick-or-treating is mostly an outdoor activity, there is still opportunity for close contact with neighbors,” said Dr. Vinay Bhooma, St. Elizabeth's chief medical officer. “So, it is important to remember that we are in the middle of a pandemic and we need to continue to wear a facemask, wash our hands and maintain social distance.”

The Illinois Department of Health (IDPH) recommends that if you are trick-or-treating it should be outdoors and in small groups. Parents around the world have had to make adjustments for their children as the pandemic continues, but there are some fun alternatives to consider this Halloween.

A few trick-or-treating alternatives include:

- Create a scavenger hunt around your backyard using flashlights to find hidden candy and other goodies.
- Decorate an area in your house, turn on scary music, wear costumes and record a Halloween family greeting to share on social media or via text to friends and family.
- Have a movie night watching some of mom or dad's favorite Halloween classics.
- Plan a special Halloween-themed meal with people who live with you.
- Host a virtual Halloween party to show off your costume and play virtual games.

Contact-less trick-or-treating is possible by creating individual treat bags and leaving them on a table on your front walkways, sidewalks or any outdoor space that allows for at least 6 feet of social distance from the door.

Costume and traffic safety are also important. According to the National Safety Council, Halloween brings about more risks for children than any other day of the year.

The organization recommends the following:

- Use flashlights, glow sticks, and reflective tape on costumes so you are visible in the dark.
- Stay on sidewalks, cross at designated intersections, and stay in well-lit areas.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be carried and used frequently.
- Candy collected during trick-or-treating should not be consumed until after handwashing. As always, a parent/guardian should check all candy to make sure it is wrapped and discard any unwrapped candy.
- Wear a cloth mask instead of plastic, latex, or silicone. A costume mask, such as those worn for Halloween, is not a substitute for a face covering.

The best way to keep safe this holiday season is by getting vaccinated against COVID-19 and the flu. For more tips on how to celebrate the holidays safely, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/celebrations.html> or the [IDPH website](#).

About Hospital Sisters Health System

Hospital Sisters Health System's (HSHS) mission is to reveal and embody Christ's healing love for all people through our high-quality Franciscan health care ministry. HSHS provides state-of-the-art health care to our patients and is dedicated to serving all people, especially the most vulnerable, at each of our physician practices and 15 local hospitals in two states – Illinois (Breese, Decatur, Effingham, Greenville, Highland, Litchfield, O'Fallon, Shelbyville, and Springfield) and Wisconsin (Chippewa

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