



Panhandle Health District

Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Panhandle Health District

COVID-19 and Halloween Safety

Panhandle Health District (PHD) recognizes the great value of tradition and celebration when it comes to holidays, like Halloween. However, as we look for ways to balance life amidst a pandemic, health and safety must be at the forefront. PHD wants our community to be aware that many traditional Halloween activities can be high-risk for spreading viruses. The safest celebrations are those that involve your household members, allow for consistent social distancing, are outdoors, include good hygiene practices, follow all health and safety measures encouraged for COVID-19, and adhere to any local public health orders in place. For those who choose to celebrate Halloween, PHD urges people to opt for low-risk activities, as outlined in this guidance for a safer Halloween celebration.

If you do not feel well, have a respiratory or gastrointestinal illness, or may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, you should not participate in in-person Halloween festivities, and should not give out candy to trick-or-treaters.

Lower-Risk Activities

These lower-risk activities can be safer alternatives

- Carving or decorating pumpkins with members of your household and displaying them
- Carving or decorating pumpkins outside, at a safe distance, with neighbors or friends
- Decorating your house, apartment, or living space
- Doing a Halloween scavenger hunt where children are given lists of Halloween-themed things to look for while they walk outdoors from house to house admiring Halloween decorations at a distance
- Having a virtual Halloween costume contest
- Having a Halloween movie night with people you live with
- Having a scavenger hunt-style trick-or-treat search with your household members in or around your home rather than going house-to-house

Moderate-Risk Activities

- Participating in one-way trick-or-treating where individually wrapped goodie bags are lined up for families to grab and go while continuing to social distance (such as at the end of a driveway or at the edge of a yard)
 - If you are preparing goodie bags, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after preparing the bags.
- Having a small group, outdoor, open-air costume parade where people are distanced more than 6 feet apart

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Sources: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#); portions also borrowed from [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)

- Attending a costume party held outdoors where protective masks are used and people can remain more than 6 feet apart
 - A costume mask (such as for Halloween) is not a substitute for a cloth mask. A costume mask should not be used unless it is made of two or more layers of breathable fabric that covers the mouth and nose and doesn't leave gaps around the face.
 - Do not wear a costume mask over a protective cloth mask because it can be dangerous if the costume mask makes it hard to breathe. Instead, consider using a Halloween-themed cloth mask.
- Going to an open-air, one-way, walk-through haunted forest where appropriate mask use is enforced, and people can remain more than 6 feet apart
 - If screaming will likely occur, greater distancing is advised. The greater the distance, the lower the risk of spreading a respiratory virus.
- Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people are able to maintain social distancing
- Having an outdoor Halloween movie night with local family friends with people spaced at least 6 feet apart
 - If screaming will likely occur, greater distancing is advised. The greater the distance, the lower the risk of spreading a respiratory virus.
- Lower your risk by following CDC's recommendations on [hosting gatherings or cook-outs](#)

Higher-Risk Activities

Avoid these higher-risk activities to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19

- Participating in traditional trick-or-treating where treats are handed to children who go door-to-door
- Having trunk-or-treat where treats are handed out from trunks of cars lined up in crowded parking lots
- Attending crowded costume parties held indoors
- Going to an indoor haunted house where people may be crowded together and screaming
- Going on hayrides or tractor rides with people who are not in your household
- Using alcohol or drugs, which can cloud judgement and increase risky behaviors
- Traveling to a rural fall festival that is not in your community if you live in an area with community spread of COVID-19

While trick-or-treating falls under a high-risk activity, which is not recommended in communities with widespread COVID-19 transmission, if you are opting to trick-or-treat, or hand out treats, please consider the following:

- Choose neighborhoods or environments that are not crowded and allow for proper social distancing of staying six feet apart. If you can't keep physical distance, it's best to avoid activities like trick-or-treating or going to a crowded pumpkin patch.
- Do not open and eat candy along the way; wait until you get home and have properly washed your hands
- Everyone should wash their hands well with soap and warm water upon returning home
- Avoid touching or removing face coverings/masks while out
- *If you are handing out treats, understand the level of risk you're willing to take.* Packaged food is not considered a common source of coronavirus exposure, but it's not without risk. If you put out a bowl of candy, a larger number of people will touch the bowl and candy. If you hand out candy individually, fewer people touch the candy, but they come into closer contact with one another, especially if children line up outside the door. It's close contact with others that creates the greater risk of COVID spread.
- *Reduce risk in how you hand out treats.* Options to reduce (but not eliminate) risk include:
 - Use tape to mark waiting spots 6 feet apart on the way up to your door.
 - Use fun ways to give the candy while staying 6 feet apart, like slide the candy down a wrapping paper tube into their trick-or-treat bags. Or individually wrap goodie bags and line them up for families to grab and go while staying social distanced (such as at the end of a driveway or at the edge of a yard).
 - When you answer the door for trick-or-treaters, wear a cloth face covering/mask.
 - Wear masks that snugly cover the nose and mouth as part of the Halloween costume.
 - Kids can decorate cloth face coverings with fabric markers or embellishments to go with their costumes! Avoid plastic masks with holes—commercial costume masks won't provide the same level of protection unless they are made of two or more layers of breathable fabric that fit with no gaps around the face. Make sure kids wear their masks while trick-or-treating.

To view this information and related information for other upcoming holidays, please visit

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html#halloween>