

VDH Interim Guidance for Participating in Halloween Events

September 22, 2020

While Halloween typically represents a time of fun and excitement for children and adults alike, the current Halloween season will be different than prior years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, the more closely people interact with each other and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. **The best way to avoid becoming infected is to avoid being exposed to the virus altogether. This is particularly important for people at [higher risk](#) of severe illness from COVID-19.** This may mean choosing not to participate in Halloween activities during the pandemic.

To protect against COVID-19, everyone should avoid close contact with people who do not live in their household, [wear a mask](#) (cloth face covering), and practice [social distancing](#) and frequent and proper [hand washing](#). Some Halloween activities are higher risk than others. Read the information below to make the best decision for your family about choosing to participate this year.

See [CDC's Guidance for Holiday Celebrations](#) for more information.

Lowest Risk:

- 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:

- Participating in trick-or-treating with distancing strategies in place (e.g. treat-givers provide individually wrapped goodie bags 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.
- Stopping only at houses where individuals are wearing masks, and it is easy to maintain six feet of distance between the host and other trick-or-treaters.
- Attending a small, outside event such as trunk-or-treat, where social distancing can be maintained and everyone is wearing a mask.
- Visit pumpkin patches or orchards, where wearing masks is encouraged and enforced, and people are able to maintain at least six feet of physical distance.

Highest Risk:

- Trick-or-treating to a large number of houses or visiting multiple neighborhoods,

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- where participants go door to door
- Trick-or-treating at houses where individuals are not wearing a mask, and where six feet of physical distance is not maintained between individuals.
 - Attending parties or events that may become crowded and social distancing is difficult to maintain.
 - Going on hayrides or tractor rides with people who are not in your household.
 - Going to indoor haunted houses where people may be crowded together and screaming.

This Halloween season, events that involve large gatherings of individuals (e.g. large Halloween parties, haunted houses, etc) can increase the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and are not recommended. These events may involve large groups of people who cannot maintain social distancing, and are often in enclosed spaces, which can increase the likelihood of COVID-19 spread. Haunted houses involve people screaming, which is known to increase the production of respiratory droplets; such activities are particularly risky for spreading COVID-19. Haunted houses that do choose to operate need to focus on how to reduce and limit contact between attendees, staff and others and must strictly follow [Phase 3 Guidelines for Entertainment and Public Amusement settings](#). Haunted houses should allow for ample space between groups touring the house to facilitate distancing, and should not decorate with materials/items that will hang in or touch patron's faces. Setups that increase ventilation and allow a patron to navigate the attraction without touching common surfaces (e.g. door knobs) further reduce risk. Haunted houses should also avoid using actors that jump out at patrons, or ensure the actor maintains 10 feet of distancing between participants. Trick-or-treating involves increased risk for transmitting COVID-19, due to the potential for close proximity to many people and the difficulty for children trick-or-treaters to follow mask use and social distancing recommendations. If you do choose to trick-or-treat, it is important to protect yourself using the following recommendations:

1. If you have [COVID-19 symptoms](#), have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past ten days, or have been in contact with someone with COVID in the past 14 days, [follow VDH guidance to stay home and away from others](#). If you are self-isolating or self-quarantining, do not participate in trick-or-treating this year, and look for other virtual options to celebrate.
2. Be sure to maintain at least six feet of distance between yourself and others who do not live in your household at all times.
3. [Wash your hands](#) before going trick-or-treating or handing out candy. Hand sanitizer should be used while trick-or-treating or handing out candy when soap and water aren't available.
4. Wear a cloth mask. Halloween masks may not fit snugly against the face and may not cover the nose and mouth. Halloween masks with gaps and holes do not protect against inhaling respiratory droplets from other people. Cloth masks should be worn under costume masks to keep a close fit over your nose and mouth. Ensure that any cloth mask worn under a costume mask does not inhibit the ability to breathe easily.
5. If you hand out candy, consider setting up an area outside, like a folding table or chairs, to set out candy. Space out the placement of treats so that multiple people do not have to reach into the same bowl or find contactless ways to deliver treats, like a candy chute that is more than six feet long. For trunk-or-treating, create distance between cars by parking in every other space.

More information about COVID-19

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread from person to person. Spread can occur when people are in close contact with each other (within about six feet) through respiratory droplets when a person talks, sneezes, or coughs or by direct contact with respiratory droplets through sharing eating or drinking utensils, kissing, etc. COVID-19 can be spread by people who are not experiencing symptoms.