

## Halloween Tips from St. Louis County Department of Public Health

Wondering how you can celebrate Halloween safely during a COVID-19 pandemic? We're here help.

First, it's important to remember that COVID-19 doesn't take a holiday. So the main points of advice for staying safe during the pandemic hold true for Halloween:

- Avoid crowds.
- Maintain six feet of distance from other people not in your household.
- Wear masks any time you are in a public space, or any space in which you can't maintain at least six feet of distance from others. (Halloween masks DON'T COUNT for COVID-19 protection – you still need to wear a cloth or surgical mask.)
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Watch your own symptoms and DO NOT participate in any activity if you feel sick. Instead, go get a test. You can make an appointment for a free COVID-19 test at [stlcorona.com](http://stlcorona.com) – click on “COVID-19 testing.”

But keeping yourself and your community safe doesn't mean you can't celebrate – far from it! The trick here is to treat your family to safe alternatives to traditional Halloween activities.

Here are some ideas for celebrating Halloween safely.



### **#HalloweenAtHome**

First, it's helpful to think of Halloween as an opportunity to celebrate at home with your family. Your opportunities for holiday fun at home are limited only by your imagination. So get pumped about carving pumpkins. Spread those spider webs across the front porch. Put out a fake gravestone or a skeleton if you're so inclined.

**But don't stop at decorating.**

If you have young kids at home, consider transforming the traditional trick-or-treating around the neighborhood into a candy scavenger hunt. Use your back yard, patio, basement or any other area of your property to hide fully wrapped candy. Give your kids their favorite candy bags and let them have at it. You can even hide a special treat and give a prize to whomever finds it.

Want to give out candy to the junior ghouls and goblins who stop by your house? Do it safely by dividing your loot into individual portions (each piece of candy wrapped of course) and laying them out on your porch, step or outdoor table. That way kids won't be digging through the same bag of candy (and potentially leaving germs). You can even buy or make a “candy chute” that you can use to drop wrapped candy or other safe treats into the bags of children who come by.

Do you have older children or teens at home who just want to be with their friends? Help them organize a virtual Halloween party, complete with a costume contest, using Zoom or a similar tool. Or have them pick a scary movie to watch together virtually, sharing their comments as they watch (“Run away! Don't go back into that shed!”). Finally, you can use Halloween as an excuse for online gaming.

If you insist on an in-person gathering, remember: outside is better than inside. The fewer the guests, the better. And be clear about your expectations for safety, including masks and social distancing.

You or your teens who drive can even arrange or attend a drive-in event, where candy or other goodies are distributed to people in cars. These events maintain some separation between people – but don't forget to wear those masks. Again, costume masks **DO NOT COUNT** as a mask that protects against COVID-19. So if you wear a costume that includes a mask, wear your cloth or surgical mask underneath it. If it's too difficult to breathe through the costume mask, just choose a decorative cloth mask instead.

### Halloween activities risk chart

To help you assess the risk of any Halloween-related activity, we've put together the following chart. Think of it like a traffic signal – GREEN events are considered safe; YELLOW means use caution, and RED means high risk.

- **GREEN (low-risk activities):** Halloween home decorating; pumpkin-carving at home; candy scavenger hunts on your property for family members; stream Halloween movies or online games at home; virtual costume parties (award a prize for best costume!) and family get-togethers; leaving individual portions of wrapped candy outside.
- **YELLOW (activities with risk):** Small group gatherings outdoors, with participants socially distanced and wearing masks; outdoor mazes, with socially distanced and masked participants (avoid screaming, as it can easily spread the coronavirus); drive-through trunk-or-treat events.
- **RED (high-risk activities):** Any indoor gathering; large outdoor gatherings; door-to-door trick-or-treating; celebrating in restaurants or bars that don't allow for sufficient social distancing; public haunted houses.

REMEMBER, whatever options you choose: Stay at least six feet away from others; wear a proper face mask underneath any costume mask; wash your hands frequently; avoid yelling or singing when you're with others as both can spread coronavirus; and HAVE FUN.

