

Delaware County Health Department

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DELAWARE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGES CAUTION WHEN CELEBRATING HALLOWEEN

The Delaware County Health Department urges continued caution to all residents of Delaware County when it comes to deciding this year's Halloween celebrations.

While individual cities and towns may enact varying degrees of rules related to Halloween celebrations (such as trick-or-treating), we encourage our citizens to consider alternatives and encourage anyone participating in trick or treating to do so under additional precautions in addition to those used in year's past. In general, we caution against participation in or hosting of any Halloween gatherings that could result in prolonged or close exposure to large groups. These include but are not limited to traditional parades, indoor Halloween parties, indoor haunted houses, and large hayrides or bonfire activities. Below, we will offer some considerations for those choosing to participate in trick-or-treating, as well as a selection of alternative options provided by the CDC:

If distributing candy to trick-or-treaters, we recommend:

- As always, hand out only individually wrapped candies.
- Select and hand out candy yourself, as opposed to offering a bowl for rummaging and selection; or have candy pre-set in individual small dixie cups for children to take.
- Practice proper hand hygiene, including handwashing, and glove use if you choose.
- Wear a mask.
- Remain present outdoors to minimize your door or doorbell serving as a touch surface for trick-or-treaters.

If you will be taking your children trick-or-treating:

- As always, visit trusted homes and only those clearly participating in candy distribution.
- Inspect all candy.
- Wear a mask, and where applicable find ways to incorporate a cloth mask into costumes of older children.
- Do not allow children to eat candy prior to returning home to wash hands.
- Carry and use hand sanitizer often.
- Avoid crowding and respect the space of other trick-or-treaters when approaching homes or traversing neighborhoods.

In addition to the recommendations above, regarding "Trunk-or-Treat" events:

- Be aware that any event that may bring in excess of 250 attendees requires Event Plan submission to your local health department for approval.
- Ensure adequate spacing of all vehicles, in excess of 6 feet.
- Ensure adequate spacing of any areas designated for foot traffic, to allow participants to remain distanced.
- Consider how you will control the number of attendees present at any one time.
- Implement mask-use rules on all attendees, at all times (young children excluded).
- Provide hand sanitizer for your attendees.

For cities and towns that will be recognizing set trick-or-treat hours:

- Promote and provide a clear means of declaring one's home as participating in trick-or-treating or not participating (Example: Printable signs welcoming trick or treaters, or signs requesting one's home not be approached.)

As always, we urge all citizens, regardless of your choice of Halloween festivities, to assume full responsibility for the health of yourself and your family, and respect others doing the same.

The following excerpt is taken from CDC.gov, and includes information presented on September 21, 2020 concerning Halloween celebrations and Covid-19:

"Many traditional Halloween activities can be high-risk for spreading viruses. There are several safer, alternative ways to participate in Halloween. If you may have COVID-19 or you 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 safe 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 second before and after preparing the bags.*
- *Having a small group, outdoor, open-air costume parade where people are distanced more than 6 feet apart*
- *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 large 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"*

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

Submitted by:

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On behalf of the Delaware County Health Department