


# PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT



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## Halloween safety tips from BC Children's Hospital and BC Ambulance Service

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**Vancouver, B.C.** – Halloween is a fun time for children, but it can be an injury-prone holiday, too.

Each year, BC Children's Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, and BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) attend to many preventable injuries involving cars and trick-or-treaters, burns from fireworks, falls, choking and cuts from pumpkin-carving.

This year, BC Children's and BCAS are partnering to provide tips for parents to keep little ghosts and goblins safe and happy this time of year.

"Kids are excited at Halloween. There is lots of nervous energy and lots of activities happening, so parents and kids can be easily distracted," says Dr. Shelina Babul, associate director and sports injury specialist, BC Injury and Research Prevention Unit at BC Children's. "It only takes a few seconds for an injury to occur, but by thinking ahead you can safeguard your kids and enjoy the day and evening."

"Halloween has become much more of a community-wide celebration; it's more than just trick-or-treating these days," says BCAS unit chief Marilyn Oberg.

"We do see an increase in calls at Halloween, so we are strongly encouraging everyone—kids, teens and adults—to be safe and responsible whether they are out on the streets or attending celebrations."

Dr. Babul also recommends that parents encourage older kids to pay particular attention when crossing roads or driveways while trick-or-treating. "When kids are texting or listening to music, they may not see or hear a motorist on the road, a car backing out of a driveway, or any other potential hazard."

### Safety Tips

**BE SEEN** – Parents and children should wear bright costumes or clothing made of flame-resistant material with reflective tape, or carry light sticks or a flashlight—it's important that motorists can see you clearly. Make eye contact with motorists. Consider trick-or-treating in a group and staying together. Don't forget to: stop, look left, right and left again—before crossing the street. Always cross the street at corners and crosswalks. If there isn't a sidewalk, walk beside the road or street facing traffic.

**CAN YOU SEE CLEARLY?** – Face painting is often a safer choice for trick-or-treaters than a mask which can obscure vision. Stay on sidewalks and driveways and off of lawns and gardens. Go up one side of the street and down the other rather than crossing the street between houses. Avoid alleys, parking lots, wooded areas and vacant lots.

**DRESS APPROPRIATELY** – To prevent falls, make sure your child’s costume fits well and it isn’t too long or has too much loose fabric. Dress for the weather, so your child and you are comfortable and warm.

**ADULT SUPERVISION** – Young children should *always* have a responsible adult escorting them door-to-door on Halloween night. Skip past houses that don’t have their porch lights on, and avoid animals that are unfamiliar.

**PUMPKIN CARVING** – Kids under six years of age should not use knives or other sharp instruments to carve pumpkins. Instead, they can be creative and draw a face on the pumpkin, or dress it up with colourful fall leaves or other safe materials. Parents should use a flashlight or a light stick to light a pumpkin rather than a candle. Children are attracted to candles, but they don’t understand flames are hot and can cause serious harm.

**CHECK TREATS THOROUGHLY** – Parents and children should make sure that all treats are checked by an adult before eating. Discard treats that aren’t in sealed packaging or look suspicious. When in doubt, throw it out!

**CHOKING** – Choking occurs most frequently among children under two years of age, but choking can happen at any age. Do not give children under five years of age popcorn, hard candy, nuts, or rubber balloons. When eating candy, parents should have children sit at a table since eating while playing, running, jumping, or talking can lead to a choking episode. Parents and caregivers should learn what to do in a choking emergency, including the Choking Rescue Procedure (Heimlich Manoeuvre), because the correct response can save a child’s life. Information is available through HealthLink BC at <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/special/chkng.html#aa111963>.

**FIREWORK SAFETY** – To be safest, plan family fun and activities that don’t include fireworks. Children should never hold lit fireworks—a sparkler can burn as hot as 700 degrees Celsius and will not go out even when doused in water. Parents should check with their municipality or district as fireworks may be banned or specific permits may be required. If you insist on using fireworks, only purchase them from a reliable source, and always read and follow the label directions. Thirty percent of injuries are caused by illegal or homemade fireworks. Keep water or appropriate fire extinguisher nearby when lighting fireworks. Parents and older children should watch the video “Just a firework, two buddies and a bomb” available through the BC Professional Fire Fighters Burn Fund website at [www.burnfund.org/our\\_programs/burn\\_education/2-BAAB.php](http://www.burnfund.org/our_programs/burn_education/2-BAAB.php).

**SLOW DOWN AND WATCH FOR PEDESTRIANS** – Motorists are advised to slow down and drive with extra caution this Halloween. Children are easily distracted and difficult to see in dark costumes, particularly if they run out between parked cars.

**ROLE MODEL** – Be a good role model for your children: act safely and responsibly this Halloween!

Don’t forget to download BCAS’s Public Service Announcement poster about Halloween safety:

[http://www.bcas.ca/assets/Community/PDFs/halloween\\_web.pdf](http://www.bcas.ca/assets/Community/PDFs/halloween_web.pdf).

For more information, please contact:

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