- Set a time limit for children to trick-or-treat. Together, map out a safe route so you know where they'll be. Remind them not to take short cuts through backyards, alleys, or playing fields.
- Remind kids not to enter a strange house or car.
- Try to get kids to trick-or-treat while it is still light out. If it is dark, make sure a couple of people are carrying flashlights that work.

Pranks That Can Be a Little Tricky

Halloween is notoriously a night of pranks—toilet papering a house or filling mailboxes with shaving cream are not unusual. Try to get a handle on your children's plans before they go out. Explain to them that while you want them to have a good time, some tricks could hurt other children or vandalize property. Emphasize that you disapprove of vandalism.

Eating the Treats

- Kids need to know not to eat their treats until they get home. One way to keep trick-or-treaters from digging in while they're still out is to feed them a meal or substantial snack beforehand.
- Check out all treats at home in a well-lighted place.
- What to eat? Only unopened candies and other treats that are in original wrappers. Don't forget to inspect fruit and homemade goodies for anything suspicious. By all means, remind kids not to eat everything at once or they'll be feeling pretty ghoulish for awhile.

TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRIME®

Crime Prevention Tips From
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Playing it Safe on Halloween

Pointers for Parents

National Crime Prevention Council

Halloween may be a fun holiday for kids, but for parents, trick-or-treat time can be a little troublesome. Concerns about children's safety—whether they are out in the neighborhood or back at home with bountiful bags of goodies—can cast a spell on the evening's festivity. But not to worry! Following a few safety tips will ensure that Halloween will be a "howling" good time for all.

"Unhaunting" Your House and Neighborhood

- Welcome trick-or-treaters at home by turning on your exterior lights.
- Remove objects from your yard that might present a hazard to visitors.
- Ask your Neighborhood Watch or citizens' group to patrol the community.
- Involve students from a local college or university to be "witch's helpers." These students help trick-or-treaters cross busy streets and watch out for ghoulish behavior.
- Drive slowly all evening—you never know what creature may suddenly cross your path.
- Report any suspicious or criminal activity to your local police or sheriff's department.

Consider This

Parents and kids can avoid trick-or-treating troubles entirely by organizing a Halloween costume party with treats, games, contests, music, scary stories, and much more. Make your Halloween party the place to be! Schools, fire stations, libraries, even malls in many communities organize "haunted houses" and other festivities for families.

Making Safe Costumes

- Check that costumes are flame-retardant so the little ones aren't in danger near candle-lit jack-o-lanterns and other fire hazards.
- Keep costumes short to prevent trips, falls, and other bumps in the night.
- Encourage kids to wear comfortable shoes.
- Try make-up instead of a mask. Masks can be hot and uncomfortable and, more importantly, they can obstruct a child's vision—a dangerous thing when kids are crossing streets and going up and down steps.
- Make sure kids wear light colors or put reflective tape on their costumes.

Dressed Up and Dangerous?

Halloween blood and gore are harmless stuff for the most part. But sometimes dressing up as a superhero, a scary monster, or a slimy alien from outer space—coupled with the excitement of Halloween—brings out aggressive behavior. Even fake knives, swords, and guns and other costume accessories can accidentally hurt people. If these objects are part of a child's costume, make sure they are made from cardboard or other flexible materials. Better yet, challenge kids to create costumes that don't need "weapons" to be scary and fun.

Preparing Ghosts and Goblins for Their Tricks and Treats

- Make sure older kids go out with friends. Younger children should be accompanied by an adult. If you live in a rural area offer all kids a ride in the car.