

# A MONTH OF FRIGHTS AND DELIGHTS!

For many people, autumn events like Halloween and Harvest Day are fun times to dress up in costumes, go trick-or-treating, attend parties, and eat yummy treats. Unfortunately, if someone doesn't take precautions, there is also an increased risk for injury, illnesses, or burns. Don't be a Halloween Horror Story – take a look at the tips below to keep yourself, your friends and family safe.

## Halloween Office Parties

This month marks the beginning of the holiday party season as many employers kick off the festivities with a Halloween costume party. Parties can be a wonderful thing, allowing employees to learn more about each other in a less formal setting. However, they also pose liability risks that most employers may not have considered. In addition to questions of “appropriateness,” there are also legitimate safety concerns. The following advice is from an article provided by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

- Develop guidelines about when (if ever) costumes can be worn and distribute them before Halloween. If your workplace does not allow costumes, or only allows them for employees who are not seen by the public, expressly say so in your policy. If your policy allows costumes only during a party at lunch or after work, be clear on this expectation.
- If you do allow costumes, consider setting guidelines that are safety-related. For example, you may want to limit masks that obscure vision or excessively muffle sound.
- Consider setting guidelines that limit the use of accessories or props with costumes, such as guns, knives or swords (real or fake), whips, chains, torches or other devices involving fire.



- Adopt guidelines that prohibit sexually suggestive costumes.
- Remind employees that they must behave with professionalism even while in costume, and to refrain from engaging in behavior while in costume that they would not normally engage in, such as touching,

grabbing, inappropriate comments or gestures, biting at people's necks, etc.

- Limit the consumption of alcohol by cautious pouring or by only providing a limited amount of alcohol for free and providing non-alcoholic options and food.
- Arrange for transportation for anyone who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- Stress to all supervisors and managers that they are responsible for setting the tone with appropriate costumes and behavior, and for stopping any conduct that gets out of hand before the situation deteriorates further.
- Do not play group games that are likely to encourage employees to tease or touch each other, such as Twister or Truth or Dare.

## More Scary Stuff: Pumpkin Carving and Face Painting

Halloween is all about costumes and decorations, and many sources provide tips on how to stay safe when trick or treating. But emergency rooms often see a surge in injuries related to pumpkin carving and skin allergies too! Keep in mind some general safety precautions when celebrating the festivities:

- Lighter yellow pumpkins are easier to cut and design, but decompose more quickly than other kinds. They should be carved soon after purchase.
- Pumpkin carving kits can be purchased for a few dollars. With these kits, it is next to impossible to cut or injure oneself with the knife's rounded point and rippled sides, but the blade cuts through a pumpkin with ease. The kit also includes a scoop for the insides of the pumpkin.
- Although parents are often told that face paint is a safer option than a mask, which can prohibit vision, some children do have allergic reaction to face paint. Always test children in advance or use hypoallergenic make-up and non-toxic crayons



## Safety Tips for Trick-o-Treat Fun

Halloween can be a lot of fun – for kids and parents alike. But you should approach this activity cautiously, as hazards are lurking around every corner. To stay safe, keep the following tips from the FDA in mind when trick or treating:

- Children shouldn't snack while they're out trick-or-treating. Urge your children to wait until they get home and you have had a chance to inspect the contents of their "goody bags."
- To help prevent children from snacking, give them a light meal or snack before they head out – don't send them out on an empty stomach.
- Tell children not to accept – and especially not to eat – anything that isn't commercially wrapped.
- Parents of very young children should remove any choking hazards such as gum, peanuts, hard candies or small toys.
- Inspect commercially wrapped treats for signs of tampering, such as an unusual appearance or discoloration, tiny pinholes, or tears in wrappers. Throw away anything that looks suspicious.
- Make sure juice or cider served to children is pasteurized or otherwise treated to destroy harmful bacteria. Juice or cider that has not been treated will say so on the label.
- No matter how tempting, don't taste raw cookie dough or cake batter.
- Before going "bobbing for apples," reduce the number of bacteria by thoroughly rinsing fruits and vegetables under cool *running* water. As an added precaution, use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.
- Keep all perishable foods chilled until serving time. These may include finger sandwiches, cheese platters, fruit or tossed salads, cold pasta dishes with meat, poultry, or seafood, and cream pies or cakes with whipped-cream and cream-cheese frostings. Cold temperatures help keep most harmful bacteria from multiplying. And don't leave the food at room temperature for more than two-hours.



## REALLY Scary Stuff...

You may want to look like your favorite movie star or singer or have the perfect look for Halloween, but choosing to change the look of your eyes with contact lenses could cause a lot of damage to your eyesight. If you want to experiment with this look, follow these tips from the FDA (the regulatory agency for contact lenses):



- **Get an eye exam:** A licensed eye doctor will examine your eyes to make sure the contact lenses fit properly. A wrong fit can cause damage to your eyes.
- **Get a prescription:** The prescription should include the brand name, correct lens measurements and expiration date.
- **Follow the lens care instructions:** Follow the instructions for wearing, cleaning and disinfecting your contact lenses that come with your contact lenses. If you do not receive instructions, ask an eye doctor for them.
- **Seek medical attention right away and remove your contact lenses if your eyes are red, have ongoing pain or discharge:** These are signs of an eye infection.
- **Don't share your contact lenses with anyone else:** All eyes are not the same size and shape and your contact lenses are fitted just for you.
- **Make sure you have a prescription:** If you don't see an eye doctor and get a prescription, then the contact lenses you get may not fit properly and may not work well. They could even damage your eyes.