Halloween Safety Tips

The world is a scarier place than it was when many of us trick-or-treated in our neighborhoods. Back then, our biggest fear might have been spilling our bag of candy on the ground or being forced to share with siblings. Halloween still can be a boo-tiful holiday if we take certain precautions and plan for a good time.

Costumes. Your costume is the cornerstone of your Halloween experience. It doesn’t matter whether you enjoy crafting your own costume or prefer to purchase one already made, but it is important to remember that the perfect costume should be both comfortable and safe. Both children and adults should wear materials that are flame retardant. If you will be wearing a mask or other covering over your face, make sure that the eye holes allow you to see well and that breathing is not restricted. Make sure that garments are not too long and don’t require high heels to avoid tripping hazards.

Make sure that any props such as swords or scythes are made of flexible plastic that will bend if fallen on. If using Halloween makeup, test a small amount on your arm a day or two in advance of the event to check for any kind of skin irritation or other allergic reaction.

Lastly, remember that you will typically wear your costume for quite a while, so make sure that you can easily get in and out of it so you can use the bathroom. Few things are less fun than impeding nature when it calls.

Trick or Treat. Children should always be in the company of a responsible adult when trick or treating. Each child should carry a glow stick or flashlight and have reflective tape on his or her costume. Plan a route in advance. If a group of older kids are going together, make sure that they text or call from time to time to check in. Stress to them that they should never cut through fields or alleys or accept rides from people they don’t know. They should also never go into the homes of people they don’t know well.

Predators do live among us, so check the Internet for sex offenders. Instruct your kids to avoid those houses. If very many individuals are registered within a particular neighborhood, you might opt for a sponsored party instead of traditional trick or treating.

Yard Haunts/Parties. First, make sure you have adequate home owner’s insurance to cover any possible accidents that might occur. If anyone gets sick or injured on your property, you are liable for them. As much as possible, avoid candles and other open flames in your decorations. If you do use candles, make sure they are in places where there is little chance that someone can set themselves on fire.

Make sure there are no tripping hazards in any haunt that you build. If the haunt is graphic and gruesome, be sure to place a warning on it so that the faint of heart know that it might be too much for them. You might prepare a second haunt that is less intense so that children and squeamish adults can enjoy it.

Pets. Remember that candy wrappers and chocolate can be deadly for pets. Choose appropriate treats for your fur family so they can enjoy the fun, too.
Candy and popcorn balls and candied apples, oh my! Halloween treats don’t have to stick to your thighs!

Let your creative juices flow for Halloween and conjure up some snacks that are fun and tasty, as well as more healthful than the traditional party fare.

Use a bowl of black bean dip or hummus to create the head of a cat. Arrange assorted vegetable crudités in the shape of a cat, and enjoy the night.

Mix a packet of vegetable dip or ranch dressing with softened cream cheese. Divide into small bowls. Place almond slivers on baby carrots to form fingers. Place the fingers in the bowls of dip.

Quarter and core apples. Cut a wedge from the skin side of each apple quarter. Press slivered almonds in place to form teeth.

Spread a tablespoon of pizza sauce onto half an English muffin. Set olive slices in place for eyes and round slices of green onion or bits of red or green peppers for pupils. Lay strips of cheese across the muffin to create mummy wrappings. Bake at 350 degrees for about 10 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and the muffin is toasted.

Unroll a tube of refrigerated breadstick dough; separate the rectangular pieces. Working with one piece at a time, stretch the dough to lengthen it. Use kitchen scissors or a knife to cut a 1 1/2 inch slit in the center of each end. Shape the four flaps of dough into knobs that look like the end of a bone. Place the dough on an ungreased baking sheet, sprinkle with coarse salt, and bake about 12 minutes until golden brown.

Cut bananas in half. Insert wooden sticks and freeze. Dip frozen bananas into orange juice and then into shredded coconut. Add chocolate chips for eyes and a raisin for a mouth for a tastefully ghostly treat.

Carefully cut off the tops of oranges and cut out the fruit inside leaving just the orange shell. Cut eyes and a mouth in each mini jack-o-lantern. Fill with gelatin or mixed fruit cocktail.

Instead of traditional pigs-in-a-blanket, wrap hot dog slices in flour tortillas and dab a bit of ketchup on the hotdog for a nail. Bake until just browned and serve with spicy mustard. They’re finger lickin’ good.

What would Halloween be without bats? Place a cheese cube on one end of a toothpick and a large grape on the other end. Stick tortilla chips into the grapes to form bat wings.

For something a bit more substantial, create finger sand-witches. Cut bread into vertical slices, slather on chopped bananas with cream cheese or peanut butter and jelly (use red jelly if you want to simulate blood). Add an almond sliver to make each fingernail.

Peel boiled eggs. Cut the bottom edges to simulate the ragged edges of a ghost sheet. Make eyes and a mouth on each egg using black or red decoration icing.

Spread soft cream cheese or peanut butter on one side of a Ritz cracker. Cut pretzel sticks in half. Arrange four on each side of cracker to form spider legs. Place a second cracker on top. Dab a bit of the cream cheese or peanut butter on small pieces of dried fruit such as raisins, cranberries, or blueberries and stick on top cracker to form eyes.

We are often reminded that we need to watch what we eat. This Halloween, you can turn the tables and let what you eat watch you.

Use extra lean ground beef or turkey to make meatballs. Bake the meatballs until done. Stuff taco shells with shredded cheese, lettuce, carrots, tomatoes, and other yummy vegetables. Place two meatballs on top of the taco filling. Put a small dollop of sour cream on top of each meatball and place a sliced olive in the sour cream to look like eyes. These spooky eyeball tacos will be a hit with the kids and with the grownups.
**Important October Dates**

OCCC early 8-week classes end on Monday, October 14; late 8-week classes begin on Tuesday, October 15.

Flu shots will be available on campus for OCCC employees on October 22 from 8-noon in CU2. Watch your email for more details in the coming days.

Fall break will take place from Thursday, October 17 through Sunday, October 20. Classes will not be held on the 17th or 18th, but the college will be open for business.

The Office of Student Life will host the annual Halloween Party on Friday, October 25, from 6-8 p.m. in the general dining area. Ghouls and Monsters of all ages can get their spook on with a DJ, delight themselves at carnival booths, indulge their sweet tooth with candy, and generally have a howling good time. Student Life respectfully requests a $1 per child donation. All donations will benefit the OCCC United Way campaign.

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**Kid-Friendly Halloween Party Activities**

Halloween parties do not have to be the stuff of which nightmares are made. There are kinder and more gentle activities that can entertain and thrill people without involving years of therapy afterward.

Set up a table to have a no-carve pumpkin decorating activity. Purchase several pumpkins (make sure to have one for each child attending the party). Buy assorted party favors such as oversized glasses, plastic lips and teeth, funny hair, and witch fingers. Get glue, markers, and ribbon, and let the kids’ creative juices flow. Have an area to set the finished pumpkins to dry so that each child can take home his or her creation.

What’s a party without games? Plan a “Pass the Eyeball” race by decorating ping pong balls to look like stressed eyes. Use markers to draw an iris on each eye and red zigzag lines to make it look stressed out. Divide children (and adults) into two or more teams with players spaced a few feet apart. Give each player a plastic spoon and place an eyeball on the first person’s spoon. The object is to pass the eyeball using only the spoons (no holding it on with your other hand). If the eyeball falls, that team must start over with their first player.

A cakewalk is an old favorite for Halloween parties. You can jazz yours up a bit by requiring participants to dance instead of walk around the square or by requiring people to use their best monster walk. If you’re concerned about the amount of sweets the kids are consuming, offer nonfood items in place of the cakes.

“Mummy to Go” tests each person’s speed and wrapping ability. The object of the game is to unwrap a roll of toilet paper as quickly as possible. That may sound easy enough, BUT the child cannot simply unwrap the roll. He or she must unwrap the roll while wrapping the toilet paper around a body part such as a leg, torso, arm, etc. Before the party, purchase inexpensive toilet paper so that each child has a roll. Unwrap each roll and tape a small prize to the end. Roll each back up. This allows each child to “win” something. A separate prize can be given to the child who unwraps the fastest.

Create a toss game by decorating a large cardboard box with pumpkin drawings. Cut out the mouth of each pumpkin making each one smaller than the one below it. Cover ping pong balls with black and orange felt or crepe paper. Let each child test his or her manual dexterity by tossing the balls through the pumpkins.

Have a Monster Ball by decorating an area with streamers and disco balls. Play some fun music and dance off all the calories you’ve consumed all night.

Making toss games is relatively easy and inexpensive. Be imaginative and make several kinds and sizes.

(Image from itswrittenonthewall.com)
Stirring occasionally. Drain the raisins and pat with paper towels to remove excess water. Add the raisins to the apple mixture. Stir in the water chestnuts and remove from heat. Let cool.

Loosen the skin on the chicken breasts. Place apple-raisin mixture between the skin and breast. In another skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the chicken breasts and cook until browned, about 5 minutes, on each side.

Transfer the chicken breasts to the prepared baking dish. Cover and bake for about 15 minutes. Remove from the oven.

While the chicken is baking, heat the milk, curry powder, and flour over low heat in a saucepan. Stir until the mixture thickens, about 5 minutes. Pour the mixture over the chicken breast. Cover and return the chicken to the oven and bake another 10 minutes.

Transfer the chicken to warmed individual plates. Spoon the sauce from the pan over the chicken and garnish with lemon wedges. Serve with a vegetable and a starch. Makes 4 servings.

Per serving:
359 Calories
15 grams total fat
96 milligrams cholesterol
120 milligrams sodium
19 grams total carbohydrates
2 grams fiber
37 grams protein

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Lightly coat a baking dish with cooking spray. In a small bowl, add the raisins and cover with warm water. Set aside and allow raisins to plump.

Spray a large skillet with cooking spray. Add the onions, celery, garlic, and bay leaf. Saute until the onions are translucent, about 5 minutes. Remove the bay leaf and add the apples. Cook for another 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain the raisins and pat with paper towels to remove excess water. Add the raisins to the apple mixture. Stir in the water chestnuts and remove from heat. Let cool.

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