



## Have a Happy & Safe Halloween! Five Tips that Parents Should Know

By Mary L. Pulido, PhD

It's that time of year again. Pumpkins, apple cider, autumn leaves - and - trick or treating! Halloween should be a fun-filled day and night for children. Parents should take precautions to make sure that their little goblins and princesses have a fantastic time.

👻 **Costumes** – Make sure that they are flame retardant. To avoid a tripping hazard, keep the length a bit above the ankles. If your child is carrying wands, swords or other accessories make sure that they are soft and flexible with no sharp points. Also, I recommend putting reflective tape or glow in the dark stickers on your child's costume or goodie bag, so you'll also be able to recognize your child easier in the dark. Finally, sexually provocative or violent/gory costumes are inappropriate for a child; let's protect their innocence as long as possible.



👻 **The Candy** – No munching allowed until Mom or Dad checks the candy. Remove choking hazards from your children's goodie bags. Hard candy, gum, or small toys with removable parts shouldn't be given to children under the age of four. If a child has allergies, make sure you remove any suspect candy, which you can substitute with their favorite treats.



👻 **Ring the Doorbell** – Remind children to NEVER enter an unknown home or apartment without a parent on Halloween - or at any other time. Children should ring the bell, step back, yell "trick or treat" and then let the adult come forward and put the candy in the bag. After a big "thank you," move along. Another word of caution, if you are handing out candy, look out the window or peephole before opening the door. Make sure that children are knocking on your door. You don't want to let a perpetrator gain access to your home.

👻 **Know the Rules of the Road** – Don't let traffic accidents ruin your fun night. Teach your child basic traffic safety rules before leaving your home. They need to look both ways before crossing the street. Make sure they do not dart out from in between cars; they should always cross at corners. Children should not be listening to music with headphones that can distract them or, wearing masks that hamper their vision. I think face paint is a great alternative to a mask. All children under the age of 12 should be supervised.

👻 **Prepare for Unexpected Events** – Carry a cell phone and a flashlight. I also recommend that you write your child's name, address and phone number on a name tag and put it on their costume in case they get lost. Carry an epi-pen if your child has allergies. Have a conversation with your child about all safety issues before they leave home so they will have a Happy Halloween!



For more information on keeping children safe, visit The NYSPPCC's website, [www.nysppcc.org](http://www.nysppcc.org)