

How Will COVID-19 Impact Halloween This Year?

By Water Quality & Health Council

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In a nutshell...

Many Halloween celebrations will be modified this year to include precautions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Depending on your county disease risk level and local restrictions, holiday activities can be selected that are appropriate without raising the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus.

How are your fall and winter holiday plans shaping up this pandemic year? Are you considering cancelling traditional family celebrations and parties to avoid spreading the COVID-19 virus? Let's take a collective deep breath and consider one of the first of the upcoming holidays, perhaps the easiest, Halloween.

If your Halloween normally consists of decorating your house, purchasing treats, helping your children prepare costumes and accompanying them as they go trick-or-treating on October 31, we think you can have a pretty normal holiday. It might just have to include a few "COVID-19 precautions" or alternate activities. The extent of these depend on the status of COVID-19 in your county.



CDC Considerations for Helping to Keep Families Safe

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued [considerations](#) to help families stay safe during Halloween and other autumn holidays. CDC emphasizes that the considerations are meant to supplement, *not replace*, state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations for holiday gatherings. You may wish to consult [your local health department's website](#) for more information on state and local measures.

CDC recommends families assess current COVID-19 levels in their community to help decide whether to postpone, cancel, or limit the number of attendees to planned celebrations. The Harvard Global Health Institute has developed a helpful interactive [COVID-19 risk map](#) of U.S. counties from which families can access their color-coded risk level. The table below provides details.

If you find your county is coded orange or red, consider lower risk activities than neighborhood trick-or-treating. These can include a scavenger hunt for your children (indoors and/or in the backyard), a virtual costume contest with friends, a family scary movie night, or indoor, room-to-room trick-or-treating with family members. Yellow- or green-coded counties may enjoy more traditional activities but not without the precautions we have all gotten used to during the pandemic.

County Risk Color Code	Risk Level (Daily Cases per 100,000 Population; 7 day rolling average)	COVID-19 Status	Public Health Activities Advised
Green	Less than 1	On track for containment	Monitor with viral testing and contact tracing program
Yellow	1 - 9	Community spread	Rigorous test and trace programs
Orange	10 - 24	Accelerated spread	Stay-at-home orders and/or rigorous test and trace programs
Red	25+	Tipping point	Stay-at-home orders necessary

Tips for a Safe Halloween Outside of Your House

Incorporate a face mask into costumes if you are going to be around others with whom you do not live.

Wearing cloth face masks can help stop the spread of COVID-19. According to CDC, Halloween costume masks are not a substitute for [proper cloth face masks](#) unless they are made of two or more layers of breathable fabric that cover the mouth and nose and leave no gaps around the face. Do not wear a costume mask over a cloth mask as breathing could become difficult. Consider a Halloween-themed cloth mask.

Stay outdoors and stay at least six feet away from those with whom you do not live.

Set a table or tarp at the end of your driveway or lawn where trick-or-treaters can pick up fully wrapped candy treats. This will avoid close contact at front doors. To the extent possible, restock the table between visits from children to limit contact.

Keep a social distance of at least six feet while walking through the neighborhood during trick-or-treating. Keep a social distance greater than six feet when walking through “haunted” forests or other Halloween-themed features that could provoke screaming. [Screaming could result in a greater exposure to respiratory particles from others](#), including from asymptomatic carriers of the COVID-19 virus.

Halloween jack-o-lanterns can be kept fresh by immersing them periodically in a chlorine bleach solution made by adding 4.5 teaspoons of regular household bleach to 3 gallons of water in a basin or bucket. The solution can also be applied to the jack-o-lantern by spraying.

Practice good hand hygiene.

Carry and use frequently a hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. Upon returning home, wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If you are setting out treats for trick-or-treaters, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly before handling treats.

A Different, but Happy, Halloween

Halloween 2020 falls on a Saturday marked by a full moon, and a “blue” moon (the second full moon of October 2020) at that, and on the last day of daylight savings time. For the sake of the children in our lives, let’s celebrate this “COVID-19 Halloween” as safely and memorably as we can, whether that means venturing outdoors with precautions or making our own fun closer to home.

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