



Harris County Hospital District

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NEWS RELEASE

Preventing Halloween Mishaps

HOUSTON (Oct. 16, 2006) – As witches and goblins prepare to fill the streets this Halloween, parents should take extra precautions to prevent injuries to their little trick-or-treaters and ensure a safe and happy holiday.

Jackie Ryan, RN, is the nurse manager of the pediatric emergency center at Ben Taub General Hospital. After working with children for more than 20 years, she says she can anticipate the types of injuries she'll see on Oct. 31 — many of them caused by the costumes themselves.

“Most of the injuries we see in the emergency center on Halloween are caused by falling or tripping,” said Ryan. “If costumes are too long, or if they have accessories that get in the way, children can become entangled and fall. Masks can also be a problem if they block vision.”

To prevent these types of accidents, parents should avoid costumes that drag or touch the floor. They should also check masks for a proper fit and to ensure vision is unobstructed.

Wearing the wrong costume, combined with carelessness, can lead to more serious accidents. Children are hit by cars every Halloween, often resulting in fractures and head injuries that can adversely affect a child's growth and development, according to Dr. Marcus Hanfling, director of the pediatric injury clinic at Ben Taub.

“It's hard for drivers to see pedestrians at night, especially if they are wearing dark-colored clothes or are running across the street,” said Hanfling. “This can lead to a tragedy, one that could have been prevented.”

Hanfling suggests that parents talk to their children about pedestrian safety, reminding them to walk, not run, and to look both ways before crossing the street. Trick-or-treaters should also wear costumes with bright colors and reflective markings that make them more visible to drivers. Other options include carrying glow sticks, flashlights and reflective tape.

Accidents happen, but there are precautionary measures parents can take to prevent most injuries.

(more)

Halloween Safety Tips

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General Safety

- If possible, avoid going out after dark.
- Children should always be accompanied by an adult or responsible teenager. It is always more fun and safer to go out in groups of three or more.
- Plan a safe route and make sure at least one other person is familiar with it.
- Set a schedule/curfew for older children who are trick-or-treating without an adult.
- Instruct children to stay in well-lit areas and to avoid dark walkways and alleys.
- Advise children to be cautious of strangers. Instruct them to never go into a home or vehicle to accept a treat.
- At home, do not leave lit jack-o-lanterns unattended, and make sure power cords for props and decorations are secured and out of the way.

Costume Safety

- Choose costumes and accessories that are flame-resistant.
- Check costumes and shoes for a proper fit to prevent falling or tripping. Avoid costumes that drag or touch the floor.
- Children should wear costumes with bright colors and reflective markings that make them more visible to cars. Other options include carrying glow sticks, flashlights and reflective tape.
- Check hats, scarves and masks to ensure vision is unobstructed. It is better to avoid masks, if possible.
- Props like scythes, swords and butcher knives should have dull and flexible edges.

Food Safety

- Examine all treats before eating. Warn children to not eat any treats before an adult has carefully examined them for evidence of tampering.
- Limit candy consumption. Too much candy can cause stomach aches and indigestion.

Pedestrian Safety

- Walk. Don't run.
- Always look both ways before crossing the street.
- Only cross streets at intersections or crosswalks.
- Use sidewalks when available.
- Drive carefully.

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