

Going Trick-or-Treating?

10 Tips for your Trick or Treat Safety

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A T T O R N E Y S A T L A W

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*“Halloween safety
starts well before
Halloween Night”*

1. Swords, knives, and similar costume accessories should be short, soft, and flexible and not easily mistaken for the real thing.
2. Avoid trick-or-treating alone. Walk in groups or with a trusted adult. Enter homes only if you're with a trusted adult. Otherwise, stay outside.
3. Fasten reflective tape to costumes or use reflective trick or treat bags to help drivers see you at night.
4. Examine all treats for choking hazards and tampering before eating them. Limit the amount of treats you children eat. Remind your children not to eat any treats until they get home.
5. Host a Trick-or-Treat party at your home. Plan games for the adults and children to play and ask each family invited to the party bring along a different bag of candy to share with your guests.
6. Hold a flashlight or glow stick while trick-or-treating to help others see you at night.
7. Look both ways before crossing the street. Use crosswalks wherever possible. Only walk on sidewalks and not in the street to stay safe.
8. Wear well-fitting masks, costumes, and shoes to avoid blocked vision, trips, and falls. Instead of a mask, wear face makeup. If masks are worn, make sure that they have nose and mouth openings and large eye holes.
9. Eat only factory-wrapped treats. Avoid eating homemade treats unless you know the person who gave them to you.
10. Never walk near lit candles or jack-o'-lanterns. Be sure to wear flame-resistant costumes. Although flame-resistant does not mean these items won't catch fire, it does mean the items will resist burning and should go out quickly once removed from the flame. Remember, flame-resistant doesn't mean fire-proof!

If you are planning a party or expecting trick-or-treaters:

- Be sure walking areas and stairs are well-lit and free of obstacles that could result in falls.
- Keep candle-lit jack-o'-lanterns away from doorsteps, walkways, landings, and curtains. Place them on sturdy tables, keep them out of the reach of pets and small children, and never leave them unattended.
- Remind drivers to watch out for trick-or-treaters and to drive safely.

If you are driving on Halloween night, be sure to:

- Watch for children darting out from between parked cars.
- Watch for children walking on roadways and crossing the street.
- Enter and exit driveways carefully.
- At night, be especially careful about watch for children in dark clothing.

Halloween safety starts well before Halloween Night. Your ability to make Halloween a safe and enjoyable night starts when you select your child's costume. When you select a costume for your child, only purchase and use flame retardant costumes. Remember that a flame-retardant costume does not mean that it is fire proof so always keep your child's costume away from any type of open flame. Make sure that the costume fits well so as to prevent your child from tripping over any long parts of the costume. If it's going to be cold out, make sure the costume has enough room for your child to wear warm clothing underneath.

If your child chooses a costume with a mask, make sure that the eye, mouth and nose openings are large enough to ensure full range of vision and allowing your child to breathe easy. Many governmental agencies now recommend wearing face makeup instead of a mask for safety reasons. Masks are notorious for reducing a child's field of vision and some children spend most of their time holding onto their mask so they can see out of it. If you chose to use face makeup, make sure you test it before Halloween on a small area of your child's skin to ensure that they do not have an allergic reaction. If your child's costume has a prop, such as a ninja sword or light saber, make sure

that they are made of soft materials and are not too realistic looking.

One of my son's favorite Halloween traditions is to go pumpkin picking. After a bouncy hay ride that leaves you off at the far end of the pumpkin field, kids always select the first pumpkin they see, which results in a long walk for Mom and Dad trying to carry back all the pumpkins back to the car. While on the hay ride, make sure your children stay seated and that you hold on to the smaller kids. Wait for the ride to come to a stop before standing up to exit.

Once you get your pumpkin home, your children can't wait to carve it into a Jack-o-Lantern. This year, my daughter, who is almost 2, will get to use colored markers and finger paints to draw on her pumpkin. She is too young to help carve and her little hands may get in the way. By giving a young child her own pumpkin to color, you still allow them to be a part of the fun that the older children are having.

My son, who is 6 years old, has a collection of child-safe pumpkin cutters. Child-safe pumpkin cutters are serrated plastic tools that allow children to slowly and safely carve the pumpkin into a jack-o-lantern. Invest in child-safe pumpkin cutters and don't just supervise your child – carve the pumpkin with them. It's great fun for the whole family to create a jack-o-lantern that everyone can say that they helped to make.

After you carve the jack-o-lantern, I am sure that your children will be looking to light it up and show off all their hard work. I remember when I was

my son's age and tried to put a candlestick inside the jack-o-lantern. The candle would never stand upright and was always difficult to light. I vividly remember my father burning his hand attempting to light the candle before he could pull it back out of the pumpkin. With the advent of small, battery operated lights, there is no need to use a candle to light up your jack-o-lantern any longer. They provide hours of light, won't catch fire and some even change colors.

On Halloween, many parents are now hosting trick or treat parties. Although many parents miss the joy of bringing their children door to door for trick or treating, such parties allow you and your children to relax and enjoy the day while interacting with other children. Decorate the house, plan a best-costume contest and have games for the both the children and adults to play. At a party, you can be assured that the treats that your children receive are safe and you won't have to worry about them going door to door and crossing the street at night.

If you can't attend a party, be sure to accompany trick-or-treaters younger than age 12. It's a good idea to pin a piece of paper with your child's name, address and phone number inside your child's pocket in case you get separated. If you have older children, have them trick-or-treat with a group of friends or their big brothers or sisters.

If your child will be trick-or-treating without you, make sure that you establish ground rules. Let them know where they can go around the neighborhood, what route they will be taking and what time they must be

home. Remind them to stay with their group and not to eat their treats until they arrive home. If they have cell phones, make sure they are charged and that they take them with them.

If your child collects bags of treats, don't let them eat at one time. Try to make a trade with your child – swap some candy for something else, such as a toy or a trip to the movies. Without a doubt, the trade off is much healthier and worth the try.

For those of you that don't have children or grandchildren, you can still do your part to help make Halloween safe. If you are expecting Trick or Treaters to stop by your home, be sure walkways, stairs and porches are well-lit and free of obstacles that could result in falls. Keep candle-lit Jack-o'-Lanterns away from doorsteps, walkways, landings, and curtains. Place them on sturdy tables, keep them out of the reach of small children, and never leave them unattended. Have only wrapped candy available for the goblins and ghouls that come to your door; although you may be well intentioned, homemade treats usually find their way to the garbage.

If you are out driving on Halloween, be sure to remain especially alert for Trick or Treaters. Watch for children darting out from between parked cars. Look out for children walking on roadways, medians and curbs as they are walking from house to house. Be extra careful when entering and exiting driveways and watch out for children in dark costumes in the evening hours. By being extra vigilant, we can all help to avoid unfortunate and tragic accidents this Halloween.

The staff and attorneys at Decker, Decker, Dito & Internicola wish you a safe and happy Halloween! I hope this report provides you with some helpful tips to make your day and our families and neighbors day safer.

About the Author

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With a 25 year long tradition and history of delivering exceptional legal services within the Staten Island community, New York and New Jersey, the Staten Island law firm of Decker, Decker, Dito & Internicola, LLP is committed to providing each and every one of their clients with legal representation and services that make a difference.

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Frank J. Dito, Jr. is a partner in the Staten Island, New York law firm of Decker, Decker, Dito & Internicola, LLP where he practices Personal injury Law. For over 11 years, Frank has been helping people who have been injured in car, truck and motorcycle accidents. He has experience negotiating with insurance companies and trying car accident injury and death cases. Frank also helps people who have been injured in slips and falls, by dangerous products, and because of medical malpractice. Frank also practices in the field of workers' compensation, helping injured workers recover financial and medical benefits for the work related injuries.

Frank is a member of the New York State Trial Lawyers Institute and the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, an organization devoted to protecting individual rights and preserving the civil jury system in America. Frank is a member of the Million Dollar Advocates Forum, an exclusive group of trial attorneys that have achieved a verdict, award or settlement in the amount of One Million Dollars or more.

Mr. Dito is licensed to practice law and regularly handles cases throughout New York State, practicing extensively in Staten Island and Brooklyn. He is a member of the Richmond County and Brooklyn Bar Associations.



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