

Tips for injury-free Halloween

By American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

Every Halloween, kids across the country parade neighborhoods in search of the most glorious prize: candy. The build-up for Halloween is almost as exciting as the day itself with pre-Halloween festivities like pumpkin-picking, pumpkin carving and selecting the perfect costume for the big day.



And though the holiday calls for fun, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) stresses the importance of taking proper precautions to avoid injuries this Halloween.

A nine-year study examined holiday-related pediatric emergency room visits between 1997 and 2006. Results of this study show Halloween among the top three holidays producing the most ER visits:

- Finger/hand injuries accounted for the greatest proportion of injuries on Halloween (17.6 percent).
- Of the finger/hand injuries sustained on Halloween, 33.3 percent were lacerations and 20.1 percent were fractures.
- Children ages 10-14 sustained the greatest proportion of injuries (30.3 percent).

AAOS tips:

- Never let children carve pumpkins. Adults carving pumpkins should remember to use specifically designed carving knives, rather than kitchen knives, as they are less likely to get stuck in the thick pumpkin skin. Carve the pumpkin in small,

controlled strokes, away from oneself on a strong, sturdy surface.

- Carving knives should be kept in a clean, dry, well-lighted area. Any moisture on the tools, hands, or table can cause the knife to slip, leading to injuries.

- Should a pumpkin carver cut a finger or hand, make sure the hand is elevated higher than the heart and apply direct pressure to the wound with a clean cloth to stop the bleeding. If continuous pressure does not slow or stop the bleeding after 15 minutes, an emergency room visit may be necessary. Additionally, it may be wise to follow-up with a hand surgeon to make sure everything is okay and nothing needs repair.

- Be considerate of fire hazards when lighting jack-o-lantern candles or use non-flammable light sources, like glow sticks or artificial pumpkin lights. Alternatively, try painting pumpkins for a fun, creative option and removes the risks of carving.

- Halloween costumes should be light and bright, so children are clearly visible to motorists and other pedestrians. Trim costumes and bags with reflective tape that glows in the dark.

- Costumes should be flame-resistant and fit properly. Be sure the child's vision is unobstructed from masks, face paint or hats. Costumes that are too long may cause kids to trip and fall, trim or hem their costumes as necessary.

- Children should wear sturdy, comfortable, slip-resistant shoes to avoid falls.

- It is important that children walk on sidewalks and never cut across yards or driveways. They should also obey all traffic signals and remain in designated crosswalks when crossing the street.

- Trick-or-treaters should only approach houses that are well

lit. Both children and parents should carry flashlights to see and be seen.

- Be aware of neighborhood dogs when trick-or-treating and remember that these pets can impose a threat when you approach their home.
- It's also a good idea to carry a cell phone while trick-or-treating in case of an emergency.