

“Halloween! Mommy, I love candy and candy is coming soon! Oh, I do love candy.”

A few weeks ago, I took my munchkins out shopping for their costumes and they had a ball checking out different characters, pressing buttons, and generally making a mess of the store. I felt right at home as I followed them around, picking up after them and discouraging my toddler from chewing on tags. We finally settled on matching Buzz Lightyear and Sheriff Woody getups and they looked fantastic!

As I was standing in line to purchase these wonderful (albeit expensive) costumes when I noticed glow stick bracelets. It was then that I recalled the safety prep portion that ties in with this holiday and I started to take note of a few other things I was forgetting that were Halloween related.

Safety was number one. My family and I must take precautions before and during obtaining free candy. It would be a good reminder for my older Grizzly Bear about roads and holding hands and a good introduction for my younger Polar Bear. Number two was getting to know our community. It's always nice to meet our neighbours, even if it's in the dead of night and we're dressed in costumes asking for sweets.

In regard to safety, Health Canada recommends following these tips for this spooky season!

Costumes

- Choose brightly coloured, flame-resistant costumes. Have you ever been driving at night and seen someone dressed in black walking their black Labrador? Now imagine that person is 3 ft tall and on a sugar high; it's probably a good idea to go with the flamboyant pink wig than a member from KISS (although hilarious)!
- Use makeup rather than a mask. Masks can interfere with vision and even breathing. Our children are likely to be out of breath running from house to house in a mad dash to get the full-size candy bars, so it's best not to add to the risks associated with the intake of oxygen or falling over the neighbours' garden ornaments.
- For youngsters such as my Polar Bear who have taken on the personality of a beaver, remove tags right away and choose costumes that don't have buttons. For children of any age, do not choose costumes with strings. These can tangle easily and pose a big risk to circulation.

Decorating

- Put any jack-o'-lanterns up out of reach if you've decided to put real candles in them. Little ones can easily knock them over in their excitement to get to your door and even littler ones can find the flickering flame more irresistible to touch than waiting in line for candy.
- Make sure lawn decorations are clearly visible and not sharp or pointy. Kids have a knack for not watching where they are going, often tripping over their own feet. It's a shame when they trip over and break your decor but an even bigger shame if they end up hurting themselves.
- Keep your pets behind closed doors. Many disastrous events happen when pets are involved in Halloween. They can harm a child or harm themselves if they get out of the house when the door opens. Pets don't understand what Halloween is and little strangers dressed in scary costumes could agitate and worry them, causing injuries.

Candy

- Little hands and big eyes can lead to disaster. It's important to repeat the same motto your parents told you – don't touch until you get home. Make sure to check your child's haul thoroughly. Not everyone has your child's best interest at heart.

It's hard not to get into the spirit of Halloween, especially when it gives you a chance to make memories with your child. My kids love the candy and I love the goofy pictures. I also like the benefit of getting to know my neighbours a bit more. This holiday is a great way to socialize and build strength in your community.

Last year, my family toured the neighbourhood and met most of the lovely folks that lived around us. For the last year, we've been able to strengthen those bonds further and it all stemmed from that first awkward conversation where my child asked for free sweets, shaking a brightly coloured bucket on their front doorstep. Holidays such as Halloween really do have benefits for parents, even the ones that don't steal their child's candy after they fall asleep.

So get out there and have a fun, safe holiday with your family. And watch out for tummy aches!