

## **Treats not tricks**

Retailers are ready with candy and fall decorations. But what is your plan for Halloween? This year, families need to consider physical safety and health considerations to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

If you do plan to distribute treats, consider sitting outside and plan to give treats (rather than allowing visitors to dig into treat bowls.) All treats should be individually packaged. There is no need to wipe down or clean packaging.

Consider non-food items like glow sticks, bubbles, bouncy balls, pencils or stickers. These options are great for visitors with food allergies or toddler/infant tag-a-longs (avoid small objects that could be choking hazards for this age group). The Teal Pumpkin Project is a program of Food Allergy Research and Education to raise food allergy awareness. The program encourages households to offer a separate bowl of trinkets and toys to make Halloween safer for all trick-or-treaters. You can learn more at [foodallergy.org](http://foodallergy.org).

Karen Blakeslee, Rapid Response Coordinator for K-State Research and Extension, recommends “When out visiting neighbors in your Halloween parade, wear your festive masks and travel in small groups, but when you’re home, wash your hands before you taste your treats. All treats should be individually packaged to reduce contamination to the food.”

Here are additional tips:

- Follow your community guidelines for avoiding the spread of the COVID-19 virus. This would include avoiding crowds and parties, washing your hands and wearing a face covering. “The look of face coverings may be quite creative this Halloween,” Blakeslee said. A costume mask however, is not a substitute for a cloth mask.
- At home, designate one person to hand out treats. Make hand sanitizer available for those who come to your door.
- Consider a Halloween drive-by parade in the neighborhood.
- Have a neighborhood scavenger hunt to find Halloween decorations.
- Have a pumpkin carving or decorating contest at home. Top the event off with a Halloween movie night.
- Always wash your hands frequently, and especially before consuming food and drink.

This may be the year you decide not to provide Halloween treats and that is okay. Your own personal health and safety is a priority, as it is the greatest treat of all.

*Source: You Asked It, October 2020, Karen Blakeslee, Kansas State University Rapid Response Center*

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