

Date: Sept. 10, 2007

Contact: Megan D. Smith
Director of Communications
msmith@ohioafp.org

Family Physicians Provide Halloween Safety Tips

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—From candy to costumes, Halloween is a fun-filled time for kids and parents alike. However, it is also a holiday that can pose dangers to youngsters.

When purchasing a costume, look for the label flame-resistant (material will resist burning) or flame-retardant (material will not burn).

Choose a light-colored costume and add glow-in-the-dark tape to the front and back so your child can be easily seen.

Avoid costumes with masks, wigs, floppy hats or eye patches because they can restrict breathing and obscure vision. If a mask is used, make sure it fits securely and has eyeholes large enough to allow full vision.

Ensure that costumes fit properly as loose-fitting material may cause your child to trip or fall. Make sure that any props, such as wands or swords, are soft and made from flexible materials.

“Caution should be used when dressing children in costumes with strings that could wrap around their necks (cowboy hats with strings, beads, neckties, etc.),” said John Vaughn, M.D., a family physician in Columbus, Ohio.

Accompany children under age 10 on their rounds; approve the route of older children and set a time for them to arrive back home. Have your child carry a flashlight with new batteries and limit trick-or-treating to your neighborhood and the homes of people you and your children know. Only visit homes with porch lights on and stay on sidewalks with lit streets.

Before going trick-or-treating, make sure your child has a good meal so they will not snack on the candy they are collecting.

“As tempting as it may be, it really is best for children not to eat any candy until they get home so a parent can inspect it for any signs of danger. Bring a small snack or a piece of candy with you from home so that if they really want a treat right away, you will know it is safe,” suggested Vaughn.

When your child gets home, inspect all treats to make sure they are safely sealed and there are no signs of tampering such as small pinholes, loose or torn packages, and packages that appear to have been taped or glued back together. Throw out loose candy, spoiled items and any homemade treats.

“If your child has diabetes, keep the candy in a place where they cannot get into it without your supervision and keep their insulin handy just in case,” said Vaughn.

The Ohio Academy of Family Physicians is a statewide professional association with more than 4,400 members, including practicing physicians, family medicine residents and medical students. The scope of family medicine encompasses all ages, both sexes and every disease entity. Family physicians provide comprehensive, continuing care to all members of the family.

FACT SHEET

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Costume Tips:

- Choose costumes with a flame-resistant or flame-retardant label.
- Choose a light-colored costume and add glow-in-the-dark tape so children can be easily seen.
- Avoid masks, wigs, floppy hats or eye patches.
- Props, such as wands or swords, should be soft and made from flexible materials.
- Make sure costumes fit securely.
- Use caution with costume accessories that have strings such as cowboy hats with strings, beads and neckties.

Trouble-free Trick-or-Treating:

- Have children carry a flashlight with new batteries.
- Limit activities to your neighborhood and the homes of people you and your children know.
- Go to homes with porch lights on.
- Walk on sidewalks with lit streets.
- Inspect all treats for signs of tampering such as small pinholes, loose or torn packages, and packages that appear to have been taped or glued back together.
- Throw out loose candy, spoiled items and any homemade treats.

Sources: www.familydoctor.org
Consumer Product Safety Commission