

Keeping Your Children Safe This Halloween

Lauren Healey, 4-H Youth Development Agent

The stores are colored orange and black, spiders and spooky noises follow me around every corner, and children's conversations center around candy and costumes. That can only mean one thing – Halloween!

October 31st is right around the corner and children are getting more excited each day about dressing up and going trick-or-treating. In addition to being a fun holiday filled with tricks and treats, Halloween can pose some dangers as well and not just from the ghosts and goblins. The number one cause of injuries to children on Halloween night is accidental falls from tripping over costumes, curbs, or other unseen objects. Fortunately, trick-or-treating injuries can easily be prevented.

Many preventable injuries on Halloween night are due to poor costume choice. The following tips will help to make sure your child's Halloween costume is safe.

Choose a costume made of flame retardant material and in order to avoid trips and falls, make sure the costumes are short enough for little feet. It is also a good idea to add reflective tape to a costume or treat bag to increase visibility. Masks should fit securely and allow your child to see well and not hinder visibility. If your child's costume has knives, swords, or other props - they should be made of flexible material so that they won't be a hazard if your child happens to trip and fall.

If using face paint, make sure it is nontoxic and hypoallergenic to avoid allergic reactions or face irritation.

In addition to costume safety, it is very important that your children are escorted and watched by you, or some other adult, at all times while trick-or-treating. The Center for Disease Control reports that four times more children are killed annually in pedestrian/automobile accidents on Halloween night than any other night of the year.

There are many different factors that can increase the chance a child will be hit - height, inability to react fast enough to get out of the way, and lack of impulse control. Distractions due to shouts from other children, looking at other costumes, and overall excitement from getting candy can also increase risk of injury.

Children, younger ones especially, should finish up their trick-or-treating before the sun goes down. The older ones should carry a flashlight and stick to well lit houses in the neighborhood.

Halloween night is a big event, especially for kids! But for parents, it's a time to take extra precautions so that your children remain safe. Following these tips will ensure that trick-or-treating is enjoyable for everyone.

For more information about the 4-H program or other youth development issues, contact the Oconee County Cooperative Extension Office at (706) 769-3946 or stop by our office located behind the Oconee County Courthouse.