

Halloween 2020 COVID-19 Guidance

As Iowans prepares to celebrate Halloween, IDPH wants to remind all that COVID-19 is still circulating in Iowa and encourage all Iowans to continue to take precautions to protect the health of themselves and their families. Many traditional Halloween activities can be high-risk for spreading viruses. For 2020 Halloween festivities, IDPH strongly encourage Iowans to follow [CDC's guidance](#) when deciding what is appropriate for their families as described below.

Lower risk activities

These lower risk activities can be safe alternatives:

- Carving or decorating pumpkins with members of your household and displaying them
- Carving or decorating pumpkins outside, at a safe distance, with neighbors or friends
- Decorating your house, apartment, or living space
- Doing a Halloween scavenger hunt where children are given lists of Halloween-themed things to look for while they walk outdoors from house to house admiring Halloween decorations at a distance
- Having a virtual Halloween costume contest
- Having a Halloween movie night with people you live with
- Having a scavenger hunt-style trick-or-treat search with your household members in or around your home rather than going house to house

Moderate risk activities

- Participating in one-way trick-or-treating where individually wrapped goodie bags are lined up for families to grab and go while continuing to social distance (such as at the end of a driveway or at the edge of a yard)
 - If you are preparing goodie bags, [wash your hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after preparing the bags.
- Having a small group, outdoor, open-air costume parade where people are distanced more than 6 feet apart
- Attending a costume party held outdoors where protective masks are used and people can remain more than 6 feet apart
 - A costume mask (such as for Halloween) is not a substitute for a cloth mask. A costume mask should not be used unless it is made of two or more layers of breathable fabric that covers the mouth and nose and doesn't leave gaps around the face.
 - Do not wear a costume mask over a protective cloth mask because it can be dangerous if the costume mask makes it hard to breathe. Instead, consider using a Halloween-themed cloth mask.
- Going to an open-air, one-way, walk-through haunted forest where appropriate mask use is enforced, and people can remain more than 6 feet apart
 - If screaming will likely occur, greater distancing is advised. The greater the distance, the lower the risk of spreading a respiratory virus.

- Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people are able to maintain social distancing
- Having an outdoor Halloween movie night with local family friends with people spaced at least 6 feet apart
 - If screaming will likely occur, greater distancing is advised. The greater the distance, the lower the risk of spreading a respiratory virus.
 - Lower your risk by following CDC's recommendations on [hosting gatherings or cook-outs](#).

High risk activities

Avoid these higher risk activities to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19:

- Participating in traditional trick-or-treating where treats are handed to children who go door to door
- Having trunk-or-treat where treats are handed out from trunks of cars lined up in large parking lots
- Attending crowded costume parties held indoors
- Going to an indoor haunted house where people may be crowded together and screaming
- Going on hayrides or tractor rides with people who are not in your household
- Using [alcohol or drugs](#), which can cloud judgement and increase risky behaviors
- Traveling to a [rural](#) fall festival that is not in your community if you live in an area with community spread of COVID-19

Other recommendations:

If you have COVID-19 or may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, you **SHOULD NOT** participate in in-person Halloween festivities and **SHOULD NOT** give out candy to trick-or-treaters

For Parents/Guardian:

- If taking your children trick-or-treating, limit the number of houses you visit and ask your children to maintain at least six feet distance from treat-givers. For small children, consider holding the bag for them.
- Only accept factory-wrapped treats. Avoid homemade treats made by strangers.
- Wipe off candy wrappers with sanitizing wipes when you arrive home. (NOTE: Never wipe unpackaged food with sanitizing wipes.)
- If your child is at greater risk of complications from COVID-19, contact your doctor before allowing participation in Halloween activities.
- Stay local. Avoid the urge to attend events in another town – it can lead to greater spread of the virus.
- Think before you go. Use the CDC's guidance on [deciding to go out](#) to assess what's best for you and your family when it comes to celebrating this year.
- Get vaccinated against the flu. Consider getting the flu vaccine before Halloween to keep you healthier overall. While the flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19, it can minimize your risk of getting sick or being hospitalized from the flu.

For Community Members:

- If your community hosts trick-or-treating this year, do it more safely.
 - Refrain from having children select their own treats from a bowl/common container. Leave individual grab bags (or paper cups) filled with goodies outside your door for children to take.
 - If you can, watch and wave to trick-or-treaters through a window. Or, leave Halloween treats outside the door where friends and loved ones live for a contact-free way of celebrating.

For Operators of Events/Attractions:

- Follow all state requirements and guidelines for Consumer, Retail, Services & Entertainment sectors, as well as any local requirements or guidelines.
- Utilize the [Iowa's coronavirus website](#) for updated COVID-19 activity in your county and Iowa.
- Do not allow groups to intermingle. Reduce capacity to allow for six feet social distancing between groups as well as employees/volunteers at all times. Reinforce distancing with markers or dividers.
- Have hand sanitizer readily available to all participants.
- Pre-sell tickets to ensure capacities are limited.
- Consider eliminating common seating areas or play areas where children and others might congregate. If seating is provided, keep it outdoors, separate benches/tables by at least six feet or use dividers, and sanitize between each use.
- Notify your local health department immediately if you learn that someone with COVID-19 has visited your attraction.

For more information:

[CDC Holiday Celebrations Guidance](#)

[CDC Considerations for Events and Gatherings](#)