

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Swafford, Ryan (MDH)**

Date: Fri, Oct 2, 2020 at 9:06 AM

Subject: Halloween Guidance

- The CDC recently posted some guidance related to the upcoming holidays, and with people asking more questions as we get closer to Halloween we wanted to mention that CDC guidance on today's call.
- No one will be surprised to hear that CDC says many traditional Halloween activities can be high-risk for spreading viruses. They point out, however, that there are several safer, alternative ways to participate in Halloween.
- CDC also emphasizes that if you may have COVID-19 or you 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.
- The guidance from CDC is not simply of the "do this," "don't do that" variety. Instead, and I think this is a helpful approach, they break out holiday activities by risk category. This information is quite detailed and available on the CDC website www.cdc.gov, so I will just give a few examples of what it says.

First, lower risk Halloween activities can include:

- 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

CDC says moderate risk activities include:

- 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 second before and after preparing the bags.
- Having a small group, outdoor, open-air costume parade or party where people are properly masked and distanced more than 6 feet apart
- Important to note here that 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.
- 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.

Higher risk activities:

- Finally, the CDC guidance recommends that people avoid certain higher risk activities to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. That list includes activities like:
- 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
- Going on hayrides or tractor rides with people who are not in your household

Ryan Swafford| MS, MPH, REHS

SW District Epidemiologist| Epidemiology Field Services

ryan.swafford@state.mn.us

Office: 507-344-2717| Mobile: 507-358-1563| Fax: 507-344-2723