

Halloween Tips and Tricks

Celebrating Halloween is a cherished fall tradition for many people. The individual risk from some Halloween activities, like trick-or-treating door-to-door, may seem lower because people are outdoors and interactions may be short. But, when lots of people participate in lower-risk activities at the same time, it raises the potential for disease spread across the state.

It's important to follow best practices to help prevent the virus from spreading. Wear a mask that fully covers your nose and mouth, wash your hands frequently, and maintain at least 6 feet of distance from people outside your household. Avoid crowds. Be mindful that using alcohol and drugs can cloud judgement and increase riskier behaviors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there are ways to minimize the risk of catching or spreading the virus while having fun on Halloween.

Think carefully about how you might lower the risk, not only for yourself and your family, but for your community. Here are more ideas about how to celebrate more safely.

General recommendations

Follow local guidance.

COVID-19 risk varies depending on the spread in specific communities, so follow the guidance of your local public health department. Use [Colorado's COVID dial framework](#) to help determine how to celebrate Halloween in your community this year, especially when considering group sizes.

Protect yourself and others.

- Regardless of a community's level on the [dial dashboard](#), people should not participate in any in-person activities, including handing out candy, if they:
 - Are sick, especially with [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
 - Have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and are currently in the quarantine period.
 - Have recently tested positive for COVID-19 and are currently in the isolation period.
- People at [increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19](#) should think about the risks and benefits of activities they are considering. Participating in virtual activities is the safest option.
- [Wear a](#) mask that fully covers your nose and mouth, wash your hands frequently, and keep your distance whenever you are out in public or around people who are not a part of your household.

Choose the safest options.

- Outdoor gatherings are generally safer than indoor gatherings.
- Smaller groups are generally safer than larger groups.
- Shorter gatherings are generally safer than longer gatherings.
- It's safer to gather with people who consistently wear masks, keep physical distance, and follow other prevention recommendations.

Trick-or-treating

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment encourages alternatives to traditional, door-to-door trick-or-treating this year to limit the potential spread of COVID-19.

- Door-to-door trick-or-treating involves mixing lots of different households at close range. When you open your door to hand out candy, you are unlikely to be able to keep at least 6 feet of distance.
- Door-to-door trick-or-treating means lots of closer interactions over a short period of time. Taken together, these may raise the risk of COVID-19 spread.
- It can be hard not to mingle with friends and neighbors. Even if you intend not to interact, by being out and about, it may be hard to avoid.
- Communicate with your neighbors to plan trick-or-treating this year. Get creative, and figure out ways to hand out candy while keeping appropriate distance. For example:
 - Line up individually wrapped treats at the end of the driveway or yard's edge. Watch the fun, and enjoy the costumes from a distance.
 - Use a plastic slide, cardboard tubes, or plastic pipes to deliver candy from a distance.
 - Take kids on an outdoor, distanced treasure hunt to look for candy or Halloween-themed items.
- **Whatever form your trick-or-treating takes, it's safest to:**
 - **Stay in your own neighborhood.**
 - Have adults accompany trick-or-treaters to help them follow precautions.
 - Stay with your household members. Avoid mingling with groups from other households; stay at least 6 feet away from non-household members.
 - If going door-to-door, limit the time you spend at doorways.
 - Whether you're trick-or-treating or handing out candy, keep your masks on -- save the candy eating for when you return home!
 - Follow [regular Halloween safety tips](#) such as decorating costumes and bags with reflective tape or stickers and carrying glow sticks or flashlights to help increase visibility among drivers.

Costume masks vs. COVID-19 masks

- Costume masks are not a substitute for masks that protect against COVID-19 spread. Masks that protect against COVID-19, should be made from two or more breathable fabric layers that cover the nose and mouth, with no gaps around the face. Wear non-costume masks when indoors with non-household contacts and outdoors whenever 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained.
- If wearing a costume mask over a cloth mask makes it hard to breathe, consider a Halloween-themed cloth mask as part of the costume instead.
- While the state mask order applies to indoor settings only, specific counties may have outdoor mask orders.
- Kids age 10 years and younger are not required to wear a mask, but we recommend everyone 3 years and older wear one, unless they cannot medically tolerate it.

Personal gatherings, all levels

- Follow local and state group size and mask orders and guidance, and use the [dial framework](#) for all indoor personal gatherings.
- Have Halloween events outside whenever possible.

- Remind guests to stay home if they have COVID-19 symptoms, are positive for COVID-19, or have had recent close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- Remind guests to wear masks that cover their nose and mouth at all times when around others (except when eating or drinking), wash their hands frequently, and maintain at least 6 feet of distance. Have a supply of back-up masks at your event in case a guest needs one.
- Avoid buffet lines, self-serve table spreads, or bars where guests can congregate and handle shared food or drink; instead, hand out food to your guests individually. Use individually wrapped items, and pre-portion items before the event.
- Provide access to restrooms and handwashing areas. Include soap and disposable towels or hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Avoid singing and shouting, as these activities may increase the risk of COVID-19 spread.
- Keep a list of guests and their contact information so they can be notified quickly in the event of a COVID-19 exposure.
- If gathering indoors, improve ventilation by bringing in air from outdoors (opening windows and doors when safe) or maximizing air filtration and circulation through an HVAC or portable system.
 - See CDPHE’s COVID-19 [ventilation recommendations](#).

Ideas for alternative celebrations, based on the dial framework

Stay at home:Severe

- Plan a virtual costume or pumpkin-carving contest.
- Set up a virtual scary movie night and simultaneously watch with friends from your own homes.
- Host a virtual costume contest or party, voting on the scariest and most innovative costume.
- Create a virtual haunted house experience. Set it up in your own home, and virtually guide people through the horror.

Safer at Home Level 3: High-Risk

- Organize a neighborhood costume parade with predetermined routes marked to maintain safe distances between participants.
- Organize a drive-by yard decorating contest where neighbors pick their favorite yards.

Safer at Home Level 2: Concern

- Throw a neighborhood face-mask decorating party, with guests limited to 10. Wear a different mask during the decoration, of course!
- Go to an open-air, one-way, walk-through haunted forest, pumpkin patch, or corn maze. Make sure masks that cover the nose and mouth are required and people can remain at least 6 feet apart.
- Have an outdoor Halloween movie night with local family and friends, with people wearing masks and spaced at least 6 feet apart. If screaming is likely (it is Halloween after all!), we advise greater distancing.

Safer at Home Level 1: Cautious

- Plan a small get together, ideally outdoors, with family and close friends; limit to 25 guests.
- Help your neighborhood with proper social distancing and one-way flow by drawing directional arrows and 6-foot spacers.

Protect Our Neighbors: Careful

- Activities, ideally outside, that limit the number of guests according to local guidance.

Guidance for event planners - all levels

Haunted houses, pumpkin patches, corn mazes, etc., held in public spaces

- Adhere to state and local orders and restrictions.
- Follow [indoor/outdoor event guidance](#).
- Require timed reservations to limit occupants, lines, and areas of congestion.
- Create a one-direction flow of participants with signs, directional arrows, and spacing indicators.
- Remind participants before arrival and onsite to stay home if sick, exposed, positive for COVID-19, or quarantined.
- Use signs to remind participants to use masks, maintain distance, and wash hands.
- Set up handwashing stations.
- Eliminate common-touch items and props.
- Consider exclusively outdoor spaces.
- Require COVID-19 masks at all times, except when eating or drinking.

More information

- CDC: [COVID-19 Holiday Celebrations](#)
- CDC: [Hosting gatherings or cookouts](#)
- Children's Hospital Colorado: [Tips, Tricks \(and Treats\) for Celebrating Halloween During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- American Academy of Pediatrics: [Tips for a Safe Halloween](#)