

Trick-or-treating, costume masks and Halloween parties discouraged by CDC this year

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued its [first guidance for the holidays](#), including Halloween, amid the raging coronavirus pandemic in a new posting on its website Monday night. Door-to-door trick-or-treating and costume masks and parties are discouraged this year due to the pandemic, the CDC said. "Many traditional Halloween activities can be high-risk for spreading viruses," the agency said in its posting. "There are several safer, alternative ways to participate in Halloween." The new guidance lists "low-risk, moderate and higher risk activities" for celebrating All Hallows' Eve.

Low risk Halloween activities

Low risk activities include carving pumpkins and decorating your home, outdoor scavenger hunts, virtual costume contests and hosting a movie night with household members. The CDC suggests, "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," as a fun event for children. "Having a Halloween movie night with people you live with," is another low risk idea.

Moderate risk events

Moderate risk things to do include so-called "one-way trick-or-treating" by exchanging goody bags placed at the end of a driveway or the edge of a yard, having a small group outside for an "open-air costume parade" where participants are at least 6-feet apart or attending an outdoor costume party where masks are worn and people social distance. A note here about Halloween masks. "A costume mask (such as for Halloween) is not a substitute for a cloth mask," the CDC said. "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." The agency is discouraging the use of costume masks this year, saying they are not a substitute for cloth masks. It is also warning against wearing a costume mask over a protective cloth, pointing out it's dangerous because it might make it hard to breathe. Other moderate risk activities include "an open-air, one-way, walk through (a) haunted forest where appropriate mask use is enforced, and people can social distance. "If screaming will occur, greater distancing is advised," the agency urged. Pumpkin patches or orchard visits and outdoor Halloween movie night with local family friends are OK in this category.

Higher risk activities should be avoided

The CDC is warning higher risk activities should be avoided. These include door-to-door trick-or-treating, attending crowded, indoor costume parties, visiting indoor haunted houses or going on hayrides or tractor rides with strangers. "Having trunk-or-treat where treats are handed out from trunks of cars lined up in large parking lots," should be avoided, too. "Traveling to a rural fall festival that is not in your community if you live in

an area with community spread of COVID-19," should also be avoided. In fact, the health agency recommends tailoring all Halloween activity based on whether coronavirus infections are spiking in a given area. Day of the Dead

That goes for Day of the Dead celebrations, too.

"Many traditional activities can put you at higher risk for exposure to COVID-19. There are several safer, alternative ways to celebrate Día de los Muertos," the CDC said.

Health officials suggest making traditional family recipes for family and neighbors and delivering them in a non-contact manner, playing music in your home that your deceased loved ones enjoyed, making and decorating masks, setting out pillows and blankets in your home for the deceased and joining virtual celebrations as the lowest risk way to celebrate Day of the Dead.

Moderate activities include an open-air parade where people remain 6 feet apart, visiting and decorating the graves of loved ones with family members or hosting/attending small outdoor dinners with local family and friends.

Large indoor celebrations with singing or chanting are considered higher risk events that should be avoided, as are crowded indoor gatherings, large dinner parties with people from different households and travelers from other locations.

"When planning to host a holiday celebration, you should assess current COVID-19 levels in your community to determine whether to postpone, cancel, or limit the number of attendees," the CDC warned.

The agency said the new guidelines are not meant to replace any local or state mandates on the pandemic.