



**The Road to Reopening:**

# **HALL** **WEEN** **GUIDANCE**

**Effective October 1, 2020**

**Guidelines and tips for a  
safe Halloween during the  
COVID-19 pandemic.**

# Introduction

It's been a spooky year and it's about to get even spookier with Halloween just around the corner! Just as it has been for all things this year, Halloween is going to look a little different than usual. But that doesn't mean that the fun has to stop! Columbia/Boone County Public Health and Human Services (PHHS) has put together some guidance to help make your Halloween plans as safe as possible.

This document details the possible risk levels of traditional Halloween activities. Given these risk levels, PHHS has outlined specific guidance to help lower the risk of such activities. It's important to note that all activities can be made as safe as possible by staying COVID Aware.

Remember, if you're feeling sick, have recently tested positive for COVID-19, or have been identified as a close contact, stay home and don't open your door to trick-or-treaters! See the CDC's [Holiday Celebrations page](#) for additional guidance on gathering during fall and winter holidays. If you would like further guidance for a Halloween event that is not covered in this document, please email [coronavirus@como.gov](mailto:coronavirus@como.gov).

# Risk Levels

It's important to understand the risk level. Below are some things to take into consideration, according to the CDC.

Celebrating virtually or with members of your own household poses a low risk for spread. In-person gatherings pose varying levels of risk. Event organizers and attendees should consider the risk of virus spread based on event size and use of mitigation strategies, as outlined in the [Considerations for Events and Gatherings](#). There are several factors that contribute to the risk of getting infected or infecting others with the virus that causes COVID-19 at a holiday celebration. In combination, these factors will create various amounts of risk, so it is important to consider them individually and together:

- **Community levels of COVID-19** – Higher levels of COVID-19 cases and community spread in the gathering location, as well as where attendees are coming from, increase the risk of infection and spread among attendees. Family and friends should consider the number and rate of COVID-19 cases in their community and in the community where they plan to celebrate when considering whether to host or attend a holiday celebration. Information on the number of cases in an area can be found on the PHHS website
- **The location of the gathering** – Indoor gatherings generally pose more risk than outdoor gatherings. Indoor gatherings with poor ventilation pose more risk than those with good ventilation, such as those with open windows or doors.
- **The duration of the gathering** – Gatherings that last longer pose more risk than shorter gatherings.
- **The number of people at the gathering** – Gatherings with more people pose more risk than gatherings with fewer people. The CDC does not have a limit or recommend a specific number of attendees for gatherings. The size of a holiday gathering should be determined based on the ability to reduce or limit contact between attendees, the risk of spread between attendees, and regulations detailed in the most current Public Health Order.
- **The locations attendees are traveling from** – Gatherings with attendees who are traveling from different places pose a higher risk than gatherings with attendees who live in the same area. Higher levels of COVID-19 cases and community spread in the gathering location, or where attendees are coming from, increase the risk of infection and spread among attendees.
- **The behaviors of attendees prior to the gathering** – Gatherings with attendees who are not adhering to social distancing (staying at least 6 feet apart), mask wearing, hand washing, and other prevention behaviors pose more risk than gatherings with attendees who are engaging in these preventative behaviors.
- **The behaviors of attendees during the gathering** – Gatherings with more preventive measures, such as mask wearing, social distancing, and hand washing, in place pose less risk than gatherings where fewer or no preventive measures are being implemented.

# Risk Levels

Given this information, PHHS has categorized traditional Halloween activities into risk categories to help you and your loved ones stay safe this spooky season. Please note that the following Halloween activity risk levels are based on the transmission levels in Boone County, MO. It is also important to remember that the risk of coronavirus transmission will still be present, even with these safety guidelines in place.

## **NOT SO SCARY - LOW RISK**

Low risk activities can be safe alternatives to traditional Halloween activities in order to lower the opportunities for COVID-19 to spread in our community. These are considered low-risk activities since they can be done virtually or with little interaction with those outside of your household.

- **Car Parade**
  - Drive Thru Trick-or-Treating
    - See page 9 for guidance.
  - Reverse Trick-or-Treating or Car Parade
    - See page 9 for guidance.
- **Zoom Party**
  - Dress to impress, grab your favorite candy and have a virtual party! Include activities such as a costume contest, Halloween trivia, or other virtual games.
- **Scary Movie Marathon**
  - Search your favorite streaming platform for their best scary movies! Pop some popcorn, turn out the lights, and get ready for a frightful night! Participating in a movie night with others is considered a moderate risk by the CDC. To lower the risk, take the big screen outdoors and keep households at least 6 feet away from others by keeping seating spaced out and provide individualized snacks. You can also look for drive-in movies in the area.
- **Home and Yard Halloween Decor**
  - Who says decorating your house is just for Christmas? Go all out this year and consider a friendly competition with your neighbors complete with virtual voting.
- **Halloween Candy Hunt (with family)**
  - See page 8 for guidance.
- **Pumpkin Carving**
  - A classic Halloween activity that, when done with just your household, is considered low-risk! Turn it into a virtual competition by displaying your masterpiece via Zoom and having everyone vote for their favorite.



# Risk Levels

## NOT SO SCARY - LOW RISK

- **Halloween Scavenger Hunt**
  - Give children a list of Halloween-themed things to look for while they walk outdoors from house to house admiring Halloween decorations at a distance.
  - Have a scavenger hunt-style trick-or-treat search with your household members in or around your home rather than going house to house.
- **Explore Halloween celebrations offered within the community**, including those offered by The District at [www.discoverthedistrict.com/](http://www.discoverthedistrict.com/).
- **“Boo” your Neighbors!**
  - Create a Halloween-themed basket of candy and fun activities. Drop it at your neighbor’s door, ring the bell and run! They’ve been Booed! If you get Booed, keep the tradition going by Booing someone else.

## SOMEWHAT SCARY - MODERATE RISK

The activities listed below are considered moderate risk since the potential of spreading COVID-19 is higher as more people gather.

- **One-Way Trick-or-Treating**
  - This is an alternative to traditional trick-or-treating as this involves individually wrapped goodie bags lined up for families to grab and go while continuing to social distance.
  - See page 6 for guidance.
- **Halloween Candy Hunt (with small group & outdoors)**
  - See page 8 for guidance.
- **Visiting Pumpkin Patches or Orchards**
  - Visit places where hand sanitizer is used before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people are able to maintain social distancing
- **Anything with neighbors/friends/moderate sized groups (between 20-50 people).**
  - Any group over the gathering limits detailed in the current Public Health Order needs to submit an Operational Plan.

# Risk Levels

## **VERY SCARY - HIGH RISK**

The activities listed below are considered high risk since the potential of spreading COVID-19 is great.

Please note that these activities are considered high risk in their traditional form, but could be considered moderate risk if staying COVID Aware by following the guidance detailed in this document. Review the following section on how to make these activities as safe as possible.

- **Trick or Treating (giving out candy, going door to door).**
  - See page 6 for guidance.
- **Festivals/Carnivals**
  - This includes traveling to surrounding communities, as the risk of transmission within Missouri is considered high at this time.
  - See page 10 for guidance.
- **Hayrides or tractor rides**
- **Trunk or treat**
  - See page 10 for guidance
- **Bar crawls**
- **Haunted houses**
- **Costume parties**
  - See page 11 for guidance
- Large gatherings, block parties, community/neighborhood-wide events
- Using alcohol or drugs can cloud judgement and increase risky behaviors. For this reason, any activity involving these substances is considered high risk for COVID-19 transmission.
- Try to refrain from screaming and shouting as this is considered a superemitter.

**These activities could be considered moderate risk if following the most current Public Health Order or an Operational Plan has been submitted and approved by PHS. Additionally, following all guidance listed within this document can also reduce the risk of Halloween events.**

# Activity Guidance

## TRICK-OR-TREATING GUIDANCE

Trick-or-treating is considered a high-risk activity due to the increased opportunities for spontaneous gatherings and common touchpoints (i.e. doorbells, candy).

In order to address this potential risk, PHHS recommends that all trick-or-treating activities take place in a drive-way or yard to allow for appropriate social distancing. In addition, we recommend that all candy be placed in individually wrapped goodie bags that are lined up on a table so that families and children are able to grab and go without congregating. Hands should be properly washed or sanitized before and after preparing goodie bags.

Below are additional guidelines to follow if you plan on trick-or-treating this year.

### For Trick-or-Treaters:

- Stay home if you are experiencing any symptom(s) of COVID-19 or other illness.
- Remain 6 feet apart from people not in your household. Limit mingling with others.
- Trick-or-Treat with a small group of friends and family (10 or fewer people) and participate in one-way trick-or-treating.
- Limit the number of houses you visit.
- Wear a face mask covering BOTH your mouth and nose.
  - Do not use a costume mask as a substitute for a cloth mask unless it is made of two or more layers of breathable fabric that covers your mouth and nose and doesn't leave gaps around your face.
  - Do not wear a costume mask over a cloth mask because it can be dangerous if the costume mask makes it hard to breathe. Instead, consider using a Halloween-themed cloth mask.
- Hand sanitize frequently while out, especially during key times like before eating or after coughing/sneezing. Hand sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid reaching into a bowl to get candy. If this is unavoidable, use hand sanitizer before putting hands into the communal candy bowl.
- Patiently wait for other trick-or-treaters to move away from the porch/door and/or person giving out candy before approaching so that you can remain at least 6 feet away from others.
- Use hand sanitizer before ringing the doorbell while trick-or-treating.
- Only approach homes that have an outdoor light on.
- If you are trick-or-treating indoors, or in an apartment complex with narrow walkways, the risk of transmission is even greater than if you were trick-or-treating outdoors.



# Activity Guidance

## TRICK-OR-TREATING GUIDANCE

### For Caregivers:

- Stay home if you are experiencing any symptom(s) of COVID-19 or other illness.
- Talk with your children about safety and social distancing guidelines and expectations.
- Guide children to always stay on the right side of walking paths to ensure distance.
- Limit the number of houses you visit.
- Remain 6 feet apart from people not in your household. Limit mingling with others.
- Wear a face mask covering BOTH your mouth and nose.
- Wash your hands as soon as you return home.
- Although there is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted by food or food packaging, personal hygiene is still important during Halloween. Bring hand sanitizer if going trick-or-treating. Use it frequently to keep your child's hands clean, including before opening a package.
- It's important that any treats your child receives are packaged and not loose or open. If you go trick or treating, bring along a package of disinfectant wipes for added peace of mind.
- If you are trick-or-treating indoors, or in an apartment complex with narrow walkways, the risk of transmission is even greater than if you were trick-or-treating outdoors.

### For Those Giving Out Candy:

- Do not hand out candy if you are experiencing any symptom(s) of COVID-19 or other illness.
- Wear a face mask covering BOTH your mouth and nose.
- All those handing out candy are strongly encouraged to do so outdoors in the driveway or yard, rather than at the front door.
- Use duct tape or other markers to mark 6-foot lines leading to the driveway or front door where candy will be distributed.
- Position a distribution table between yourself and trick or treaters.
- Distribute candy on a disinfected table to eliminate direct contact.
- Consider creating individual "goodie bags" that trick-or-treaters can take from a table. Bags could contain candy and other goodies, such as small toys.
  - It's important that any treats you distribute are packaged and not loose or open.
- Wash or sanitize hands often.
- Frequently sanitize doorbells and other common touch points near the door/candy distribution area.
- Turn the outdoor light on to signal you are comfortable with people coming to your door to get candy.
- Encourage apartment complex managers to add arrows to the ground, or share a map, to show which path trick-or-treaters should take.



# Activity Guidance

## **SPOOK-TAKULAR CANDY HUNT: HOUSEHOLDS**

It's like an Easter Egg Hunt, but spooky! Since this can take place inside your home with only your family members, this is a low-risk activity.

### **How to Play:**

1. Hide candy throughout your home. You could also hide Halloween-inspired toys, like spider rings, or your kids' favorite snacks (as long as they don't need to be refrigerated). Consider getting Halloween-themed containers or using Easter eggs to hide the treats inside.
2. Everyone dresses up in their costumes! Turn on some frightful music and turn off the lights to add to the fun!
3. The Hunt is on! See who can find the most candy.
4. After all the candy is found, see who collected the most. Choose a few pieces to eat now, but save some for later (you don't want a tummy ache).

**BONUS:** If you really want to have some fun, have one person pop out and scare everyone else as they are searching!

## **SPOOK-TAKULAR CANDY HUNT: SMALL GROUP & OUTDOOR**

This guidance is for a small group (10 people or less) or a household that would like to take their candy hunt outside. If you choose to hunt with a small group outside of your household, this is considered a moderate-risk activity. We recommend having the hunt while it is still light out.

### **How to Play:**

1. Choose a location where everyone can spread out, such as a big backyard. Sanitize hands before hiding candy throughout the area.
2. Everyone dresses up in their costumes!
3. Turn on some frightful music while everyone sanitizes their hands.
4. The Hunt is on! See who can find the most candy.
5. After all the candy is found, see who collected the most. Choose a few pieces to eat now, but save some for later (you don't want a tummy ache).

### **Guidelines**

- Caregivers should stay with children to ensure they do not get within 6 feet of others.
- To avoid congestion, assign different areas where participants should begin their search.
- Have a social distance monitor ensure that everyone is maintaining social distance. Have a signal, such as a whistle or bell, to indicate when people are getting too close to each other. You can make this a part of the game. If they hear the signal, everyone must stop, look around, and distance themselves from others.
- Avoid yelling, as this is a superemitter.
- Trying to take other's candy is prohibited (because we should avoid shared objects, but also because that's cheating!)

# Activity Guidance

## VEHICLE-BASED PARADES OR DRIVE-THRU EVENT GUIDANCE

- A Vehicle-Based Parade or Drive Thru Event is a low risk activity in which participants are either in a vehicle or spectating.
- All occupants of vehicles must be members of the same household. Participants cannot change vehicles during the parade.
- All spectators must be properly spaced (at least 6 ft.) and adhering to gathering limits outlined in the most current Public Health Order.
- The Vehicle-Based Parade or Drive Thru Event must have a designated organizational host who is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Order and Operational Plan (if applicable) during the event (“Host”).
- An Operational Plan is needed if exceeding gathering limits in the most current Public Health Order. This includes those in vehicles and those spectating.
- The Host is responsible for planning the Vehicle-Based Parade event in a manner that complies with all ordinances, permitting requirements, traffic control requirements, and laws of the city or other locality where the event is held.
- If any windows on a vehicle is open, the occupants of the vehicle must wear a face covering if anyone approaches the vehicle.
- Any items or food and drink related trash brought by occupants of a vehicle should remain in the vehicle. Packaged candy or other prepackaged, non-perishable food can be distributed as part of treat bags.

## EXAMPLES OF VEHICLE-BASED PARADES FOR HALLOWEEN

### Reverse Trick-or-Treating

- Organize a reverse trick-or-treat in your neighborhood! Strut your stuff by dressing up in your Halloween costume and stand in the yard or on the sidewalk as people drive by and throw out candy from the vehicle.
- Lower the risk of transmission by only standing with members in your household.
- Remember traffic safety and avoid running up to vehicles to receive candy.
- Those throwing candy from the vehicle should sanitize hands regularly and wear gloves if possible. Have a face mask handy in case someone comes up to your vehicle.

### Drive-Thru Trick-or-Treating

- Organize a drive-thru trick-or-treating event where children ride in vehicles and pick up treat bags filled with candy along the parade route.
- Lower the risk of transmission by having only one or two members of the same household pass out candy at each candy pick-up location along the route.
- Those passing out and receiving candy must do so while adhering to face covering requirements.
- All participants should sanitize hands regularly along the route by using a sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.



# Activity Guidance

## Things to Consider for Vehicle-Based Parade or Drive Thru Event Operational Plans

- The Operational Plan should be submitted by the Host and approved by PHHS prior to inviting persons to participate in the Vehicle-Based Parade event.
- Consider how event organizers will ensure that only a certain number of cars will be participating in the parade. Consider an invitation only system or preregistration for all participating vehicles in order to effectively plan for traffic.
- Consider how all social distancing requirements will be met for spectators. Will they be in their own driveway/yard? Will there be a designated area to watch if outside of a neighborhood?
- Will participants be getting out the vehicle at any time? If so, what for?
- Detail any auxiliary activities in addition to the parade itself (i.e. food trucks, games, etc.)

## TRUNK OR TREAT

This is considered a unique event; therefore, an Operational Plan must be submitted to PHHS for review. Use this link to submit an Operational Plan: <https://forms.gle/PxGzJzTizR2vtWui7>

### Special Considerations

- How to limit congregations and how to ensure gathering requirements detailed in Operational Plan will be met. This includes how event organizers will prevent intermingling between attendees.
- How to ensure appropriate distance between vehicles/booths.
- Way of giving out candy. Refer to Trick-or-Treating guidance.
- How to avoid congestion around trunk or booths (i.e. limiting the people around your area at a time)
- Consider alternative auxiliary events. For example, instead of having games, have a decorating contest.

## CARNIVALS OR FESTIVALS

This is considered a unique event; therefore, an Operational Plan must be submitted to PHHS for review. Use this link to submit an Operational Plan: <https://forms.gle/PxGzJzTizR2vtWui7>

# Activity Guidance

## COSTUME PARTY

Costume parties are a fun Halloween tradition, but will need to be adapted in order to be as COVID safe as possible. All events must follow social distancing and mask requirements, as well as gathering limits, as outlined in the current Health Order. If exceeding gathering limitations in the Health Order, this is considered a unique event; therefore, an Operational Plan must be submitted to PHHS for review. Use this link to submit an Operational Plan:

<https://forms.gle/PxGzJzTizR2vtWui7>

Below are general guidelines for costume parties:

- According to the CDC, attending crowded costume parties held indoors is a higher risk activity even with windows open.
- Attending a costume party held outdoors where protective masks are used and people can remain more than 6 feet apart is considered moderate-risk.
  - 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.
- If you are hosting a Costume Party that meets the gathering limits of the [Health Order](#), refer to the [Events & Gatherings section of The Road to Reopening: Guidance for Businesses during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). Also, review the section on Restaurants for information about food safety protocols.
- Using alcohol or drugs can cloud judgement and increase risky behaviors.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Does my Halloween mask count as a face mask?**

No, do not use a costume mask as a substitute for a cloth mask unless it is made of two or more layers of breathable fabric that covers your mouth and nose and doesn't leave gaps around your face. Do not wear a costume mask over a cloth mask because it can be dangerous if the costume mask makes it hard to breathe. Instead, consider using a Halloween-themed cloth mask or find one that matches your costume.

## **Do I need to disinfect all the candy I get? Should I empty my candy bag outside?**

Although there is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted by food or food packaging, personal hygiene is still important during Halloween. Disinfecting all candy packaging is not necessary, but bring hand sanitizer if going to an outdoor event or going trick-or-treating. Use it frequently to keep your and your child's hands clean, including before opening a package.

## **What is the risk associated with candy from a house where someone is positive with COVID-19?**

There is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted by food or food packaging. To avoid transmission and limit interactions with others, those with COVID-19, or those experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, should not hand out candy.

## **What if I don't like the candy that was given to me?**

If you touch it, you need to take it. Do not put candy back where you got it from. You can take a few seconds to scan the candy to find the one you like (look with your eyes, not with your hands), but don't linger too long.

## **What if I want to have an event that is not detailed in this document, what do I do?**

If you would like further guidance for a Halloween event that is not covered in this document, please email [coronavirus@como.gov](mailto:coronavirus@como.gov).