



Tip Sheet: Safer Halloween

October 2, 2020

The following tip sheet was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health for use by San Francisco residents and will be posted at <http://www.sfgdcp.org>. This tip sheet may change as information is updated.

AUDIENCE: General public who are choosing to celebrate Halloween

BACKGROUND: Halloween is a cherished holiday with its own important and unique social and community roles. Due to the communal nature of many traditional fall holiday activities, the City of San Francisco wishes to support our residents in celebrating a [Safer Halloween](#) in order to [reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19](#) [see more at sfgdcp.org/safersocial]. This Tip Sheet will provide guidance on which activities are not permitted, as well as offering suggestions on many safer ways to celebrate.

Halloween Activities Not Permitted During COVID-19

Do not participate in the following activities, which **are prohibited** by local or state public health orders:

- Gatherings of more than 12 persons, indoor or outdoor
- Indoor Halloween gatherings, celebrations, events or parties with non-household members
- Haunted houses, carnivals, festivals, and live entertainment attractions

Halloween Activities Discouraged During COVID-19

These activities are discouraged due their high risk of COVID-19 transmission:

- Traditional door-to-door trick-or-treating or “trunk-or-treating” between cars because it can be difficult to maintain [6 feet of physical distance when multiple households gather on a street or in a space](#), and food sharing can be unsafe
- Traveling to a rural fall festival. Unnecessary travel can spread COVID-19. Festivals are higher risk because people from multiple households are gathered together, and maintaining 6 feet of distance at all times can be difficult.

Safer Halloween Activities Permitted and Encouraged

San Francisco DPH encourages these types of safer family and home-based activities, and the use of re-opened and permitted business and social activities:

- **In the home:**
 - Dressing up living space and outdoor areas with Halloween-themed decorations
 - Virtual parties/contests (e.g. costume contests or pumpkin carving)



- Creating a haunted house in your living space for members of your household
- Scavenger hunt for hidden treats in your living space for members of your household, rather than going house-to-house
- Having a scary movie night or other Halloween-themed activities:
 - Dance party with Halloween music
 - Pumpkin carving
 - Face painting
 - Design-your-own mask
 - Creating homemade pumpkin spice hand sanitizer at home
- **Safer outdoor activities:**
 - **Remember that outdoors is always safer than indoors**
 - Participate in a Halloween scavenger hunt in your neighborhood with a group of **no more than 12 people** while maintaining at least 6 feet physical distance as much as possible. Be sure everyone is wearing a face covering over their mouth and nose since participants may accidentally come closer than 6 feet apart while searching for objects.
 - Look for hidden pre-wrapped treats
 - Look for fun Halloween-related objects (e.g. witches, spiderwebs, black cats)
 - Outdoor pumpkin carving
 - Halloween themed meals at outdoor restaurants to support local businesses
 - Although trick-or-treating is discouraged, if you choose to do so, consider laying out individually wrapped goodie bags that are lined up for families to grab and go while continuing to physically 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 or attending an outdoor, open-air costume parade with **no more than 12 people**, where protective masks are used and people can remain more than 6 feet apart
 - A traditional costume mask (such as for Halloween) is not a substitute for a face covering that fits properly over the nose, mouth, and chin. Face coverings can be decorated to be part of a costume. 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.
 - **Please respect your neighbors and your community**
 - Some of your neighbors may be uncomfortable celebrating Halloween in any way this year, and we ask that you respect your neighbor's wishes and concerns
 - Everyone is navigating the COVID-19 pandemic to the best of their abilities and has different comfort levels about what is safe to do.



Always Take Personal Protective Measures

Regardless of how you choose to celebrate Halloween, it is important to keep the following in mind:

1. **Face Coverings:** Wear a cloth face covering that securely covers nose and mouth to prevent disease spread when outside your home and around others that are not part of your household. **Note:** plastic, rubber, vinyl, and other **Halloween costume masks are not acceptable substitute for cloth face-coverings** to prevent COVID-19 spread.
2. **Practice Physical Distancing:** Stay at least 6 feet away (three or more adult steps) from all other people who are not part of your own household, especially when talking, eating, or drinking.
3. **Outdoors is much safer:** Avoid confined spaces, especially indoors.
4. **Good Hygiene:** Wash or sanitize your hands often. Clean high touch items regularly.
5. **Minimize Mixing:** Plan activities to limit mixing between different households. Currently, social gatherings of more than 12 people are prohibited. You are permitted to gather with more than 12 people if all those individuals live with you. That means that on Halloween, if you are spending time with others, you must stick with a maximum of 12 people and not mingle with others.
6. **Stay Home If You Are Sick or You are in a High-Risk Group:** If you are sick, or you have been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19 please [get tested](#) and stay home and away from others. [People at higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19](#) (such as older adults, people with chronic medical conditions) are strongly urged to stay home.

Resources

- San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFPDH)
 - sfcdcp.org/covid19
- City & County of San Francisco (SFGOV)
 - Guidance on safer social interactions during the pandemic sfcdcp.org/safersocial
 - Social Distancing <https://sf.gov/stay-6-feet-apart-social-distancing>
 - Stay Home. Save Lives <https://sf.gov/stay-home-except-essential-needs>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



- Fall Holiday celebrations
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html#halloween>
- Hosting Gatherings or cook-outs
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/personal-social-activities.html#gatherings>
- When and how to wash your hands
<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>
- LA County Public Health
 - Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Celebrating Halloween
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/docs/community/GuidanceHalloween.pdf>
- Other Bay Area counties
 - **Joint Statement by the Association of Bay Area Health Officers** (posted by Alameda County)
 - Guidance on How to Celebrate Halloween and Día de Los Muertos Safely and Prevent Spreading COVID-19 Among Friends and Neighbors
<https://covid-19.acgov.org/covid19-assets/docs/press/joint-statement-2020.09.28.pdf>
 - Contra Costa County
 - Contra Costa Health Services Recommends Planning Safe, Planning Ahead for Halloween
<https://cchealth.org/press-releases/2020/0916-Planning-Safe-Halloween.php>
 - Marin County
 - Guidance for Safer Halloween and Dia de los Muertos Celebrations during COVID-19
<https://coronavirus.marinhhs.org/guidance-safer-halloween-and-dia-de-los-muertos-celebrations-during-covid-19-pandemic>