



County of Sacramento

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Contact: John Rogers
(916) 875-8409 / Cell 207-7376

Trick-or-Treat Food Safety Tips

What kid doesn't look forward to wearing a costume and collecting candy and other treats on Halloween? For parents, though, the thought of your little ones stuffing their faces with mystery food is enough to haunt you all year! If you want your little ghouls and goblins to have a happy and healthy Halloween, keep these tips from the Sacramento County Environmental Management Department in mind:

Tips for parents before Trick-or-Treat

- The best way to keep children from tearing open their candy early is to give them a light meal or snack before they head out – don't send them out on an empty stomach.
- Urge your children to wait until they get home to eat their treats so you can inspect the contents of their "goody bags."

Trick-or-Treat food safety tips

- Eat only factory-wrapped treats. Discard homemade goodies unless you know the cook well.
- Inspect factory-wrapped treats for signs of tampering, such as an unusual appearance of discoloration, tiny pinholes, or tears in wrappers. Throw away anything that looks suspicious.
- Parents of very young children should remove any choking hazards such as gum, nuts, hard candies or small toys. Parents of children with food allergies need to take extra caution and read food labels.

Consider giving alternative treats

- Packages of low-fat crackers with cheese
- Mini boxes of raisins
- Packages of hot chocolate mix
- Microwaveable popcorn
- Non-food items like stickers, book markers, coloring books, and crayons

Expecting party guests?

- If food is catered, make sure you are working with a reputable caterer and have properly working chafing dishes to keep hot food hot. Keep hot foods hot at a safe temperature of 135° F or above.
- Keep cold foods cold. Make sure there is plenty of room in your refrigerator to store cold foods before, during, and after the party. The refrigerator should hold foods at 41° F or cooler to prevent bacterial growth.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables should be washed well before serving.
- If juice or cider is served to children at Halloween parties, make sure it is pasteurized or otherwise treated to destroy harmful bacteria. The label will state if the juice or cider has been treated.

For more information on Halloween health and safety tips, visit the following websites:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/family/halloween

Consumer Product Safety Commission <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/100.html>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm187021.htm>

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