

Tips for a Safe Halloween

Whether you're goblin or ghoul, vampire or witch, poor costume choices—including a new fad decorative contact lenses and flammable costumes—can haunt you long after Halloween if they cause injury.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) joins eye care professionals—including most Ophthalmology professional association in discouraging consumers from using decorative contact lenses.

These experts warn that buying any kind of contact lenses without an examination and a prescription from an eye care professional can cause serious eye disorders and infections, which may lead to permanent vision loss. Also it is illegal to sell decorative contact lenses without a valid prescription.

The decorative lenses make the wearer's eyes appear to glow in the dark, create the illusion of vertical "cat eyes," or change the wearer's eye color.

Safe Costumes

Enjoy a safe and happy Halloween by following the "lucky 13" guidelines from FDA, Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

1. Wear costumes made of fire-retardant materials; look for "flame resistant" on the label. If you make your costume, use flame-resistant fabrics such as polyester or nylon.
2. Wear bright, reflective costumes or add strips of reflective tape so you'll be more visible; make sure the costumes aren't so long that you're in danger of tripping.
3. Wear makeup and hats rather than masks that can obscure your vision.
4. Test the makeup you plan to use by putting a small amount on your arm a couple of days in advance. If you get a rash, redness, swelling, or other signs of irritation where you applied it, that's a sign you may be allergic to it.
5. Check FDA's list of color additives to see if additives in your makeup are FDA approved. If they aren't approved for their intended use, don't use it.
6. Don't wear decorative contact lenses unless you have seen an eye care professional and gotten a proper lens fitting and instructions for using the lenses.

Safe Treats

Eating candy and treats is also a big part of the fun on Halloween. If you're trick-or-treating, health and safety experts say you should remember these tips:

7. Don't eat candy until it has been inspected at home.
8. Trick-or-treaters should eat a snack before heading out, so they won't be tempted to nibble on treats that haven't been inspected.
9. Tell children not to accept—or eat—anything that isn't commercially wrapped.

10. Parents of very young children should remove any choking hazards such as gum, peanuts, hard candies, or small toys.
11. Inspect commercially wrapped treats for signs of tampering, such as an unusual appearance or discoloration, tiny pinholes, or tears in wrappers. Throw away anything that looks suspicious.

For partygoers and party throwers, FDA recommends the following tips for two seasonal favorites:

12. Look for the warning label to avoid juice that hasn't been pasteurized or otherwise processed, especially packaged juice products that may have been made on site. When in doubt, ask! Always ask if you are unsure if a juice product is pasteurized or not. Normally, the juice found in your grocer's frozen food case, refrigerated section, or on the shelf in boxes, bottles, or cans is pasteurized.
13. Before bobbing for apples—a favorite Halloween game—reduce the amount of bacteria that might be on apples by thoroughly rinsing them under cool running water. As an added precaution, use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.

Source: USDA – Food and Drug Administration