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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF POISON CONTROL CENTERS

3201 New Mexico Avenue • Suite 330 • Washington, DC 20016
Main 202-362-7217 • Fax 202-362-3240 • E-mail aapcc@poison.org
www.aapcc.org • www.1-800-222-1222.info

Poison Centers Urge Parents to Beware of Tricky Treats!

It's a Halloween tradition: parents are scared stiff by the specter of tainted treats.

Happily, the well-circulated stories about evil-doers poisoning unsuspecting trick-or-treaters are generally false. Studies have revealed only a few cases of intentionally poisoned treats since the late 1950's. Parents should, however, protect their young princesses and goblins by taking simple, preventative measures.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) encourages parents and guardians to accompany young children while trick-or-treating, to limit trick-or-treating to familiar neighborhoods, and to carefully inspect all candy and treats before children can eat them. A safe Halloween is a happy Halloween!

The AAPCC offers these additional tips for a poison-safe holiday:

Do:

- Feed children before they go trick-or-treating so they're less likely to eat candy before it can be inspected.
- Instruct children to bring all treats home first before sampling.
- Inspect all treats before children eat them.
 - Discard candy with a torn or punctured wrapper.
 - Discard home-made treats unless you know and trust who made them.
 - Inspect fruit and slice into sections.
- Remember that there are natural reasons for candy to look different. The Candy USA website, <http://www.candyusa.org/Health/naturaloccur.shtml>, has pictures and explanations of candy manufacturing quality issues.
- Contact local law enforcement officials if candy truly appears to be tampered with.
- Contact the local poison center at 1-800-222-1222 if you have concerns about a possible poisoning.
- Choose and use non-toxic make-up and face paints.
- Wash the child's face with soap and water if a reaction to face paint develops.

Call 1-800-222-1222 for poison emergencies or questions. This nationwide number is answered by the poison center closest to the caller.

- Use caution when “glow sticks” are part of the costume: if the glow stick is chewed or broken open, the active ingredient can irritate the skin and eyes. Any exposure, including swallowed contents, should be reported to a poison center at 1-800-222-1222.
- Be sure to carry a flashlight and watch for cars.
- Keep jack o’ lanterns clear of doorways, landings, curtains and other flammables.
- Replace jack o’ lantern candles with glowsticks or flashlights where possible.

Don’t:

- Bring candy to the hospital to be x-rayed. X-rays only detect metal objects that parents can find by inspection. Furthermore, the extra cars on the road pose a danger to other trick-or-treaters.
- Feed candy to pets. Some, especially chocolate, can be toxic.
- Allow children to handle dry ice.
- Put dry ice into a drink.
- Let children carve the jack o’ lantern.
- Make or purchase dark or restrictive costumes for children. Costumes should be made of flame-retardant materials; include reflective tape; and not restrict vision, hearing, or walking.

With the excitement of candy, costumes and friends, children can forget to be careful. Parents who are especially vigilant and use common sense will keep Halloween safe.

For more information on poisoning prevention, parents can call the toll-free poison emergency hotline at 1-800-222-1222. Local poison experts are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to answer questions about poisoning prevention and treatment. Poisoning prevention information is also available on the Web at www.1-800-222-1222.info.

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