

BROADCAST-COVID-19 vaccine reduces trick-or-treating concerns

Halloween trick-or-treating and community gatherings are a little less scary this year because of the COVID-19 vaccine which has reduced risk of spread. However, Lori Grooms, OSF HealthCare director of Infection Control and Prevention says it still makes sense to take precautions such as making sure kids over two wear a protective mask. Costume masks are not designed to protect from virus particles that spread through the air.

Grooms says it's best to incorporate a medical-grade or cloth mask into a Halloween costume.

“Let’s say your child is going to be a cat, get a mask on which you can draw the cat’s nose and whiskers. Or if they’re going to be an angel, get a white mask. Somehow, try to incorporate it into the costume.” (:17)

Grooms warns that kids should stay within their smaller group of friends and keep a three to six-foot physical distance from others.

“If there’s a group of kids at the door step, you may not want your kids going up to the door, especially if you don’t know who the children are. You might want to step back and wait for them to exit before you go up; again avoiding those big, cluster groups.” (:16)

Each family needs to make their own decisions about what they're comfortable allowing their child to do. For example, they should consider additional precautions if there's someone at home who is immunocompromised.

“If you’re comfortable with your child handing it (candy) out, another additional level (of safety is having them wear a mask or have the treat set out but off to the side where they can interact and talk to the people as they come by.” (:18)

Since the early days of the pandemic, infection prevention leaders have learned the COVID-19 virus doesn't live on surfaces long so there's no need to quarantine candy but Grooms suggests kids should still wash their hands before chowing down a Milky Way or Twix bar.

“Eating Halloween candy is no different than eating a candy bar you pick up at the grocery store. You want to make sure your hands are clean because your hands are going to have more bacteria or viruses on them than you would pick up from the wrapper itself.” (:16)

As with any virus, children who are showing signs of illness should be kept at home to rest and avoid exposing others to their germs.