

Halloween should be "ah-Boo", not "ah-Choo"

Simple precautions to keep trick-or-treaters' from eating the wrong thing

Costumed kids will soon be scurrying from door-to-door and yelling "trick-or-treat" with wide-eyed anticipation of running off with something good to eat.

It's an innocent night filled with innocent fun, but should come with a healthy dose of precaution, especially for parents.

Mom and Dad already know to warn children to watch crossing the street, to carry a flashlight and make sure costumes can be seen and those wearing them can see clearly. But what about the bounty of candy and other treats the kids will be gathering?

Food allergies are becoming more common, so its important parents insist that children don't eat any of it until they get home and have it checked.

"For the younger kids, you want to make sure there's not a choking hazard," says Dr. Jane Pearson, EMS Medical Director and Emergency Physician at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center, in Rockford. "And for, certainly for those children with any kind of allergies, to check the ingredient list on all the candy to make sure that there is nothing that would harm the child."

Dr. Pearson says peanuts and peanut-based ingredients are the biggest concern. She also advises that consumption should be moderated.

"I was guilty as a child of this too," says Dr. Pearson. "Completely binging on the candy and eating all the candy in one fell swoop is probably not a good idea for your child. And, so, if you can get the candy and ration it out in smaller aliquots, is a good idea."

As for all of us greeting the trick-or-treaters' at our door, Dr. Pearson suggests handing out commercially packaged candy and food items that are well wrapped and labeled. With that, she says any homemade treats found by parents should be disposed of because you can't be certain of the ingredients or how it was made.