

Avoid the “Boo-Boos” this Halloween



Halloween is among the top three holidays producing the most emergency room visits, according to a nine-year study of pediatric emergency room visits between 1997 and 2006.

Most of the injuries were to the finger or hand with 33.3 percent being lacerations and 20.1 percent being fractures. The greatest portion of total injuries at 30.3 percent, were sustained by children, ages 10-14. Therefore, the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) asks children and adults to take some simple precautions to remain safe for Halloween.

Here are safety tips to remember as the whole family gets ready to celebrate:

—Children should not carve pumpkins. However, some carving devices or kits can be used by older children with adult supervision. Young children can have fun emptying the seeds instead of carving.

Think about painting pumpkins instead of carving as well. Remember to wash all pumpkins with soap and water before they are carved, because bacteria may be on the surface of the pumpkin and can be ingested accidentally, causing severe illness.

—Remember to use a pumpkin carving kit or knives specially designed for carving, as they are designed to not get stuck in the pumpkin.

—Always carve pumpkins in a clean, dry and well-lit area and make sure there is no moisture on the carving tools or your hands. Remember to cut away from your body and do not rush.

Extension Corner

Written by Tracy Trumper

—If there is a cut hand or finger, elevate the limb higher than the heart and apply direct pressure to the wound with a clean cloth to stop the bleeding. If continuous pressure does not slow or stop the bleeding within 15 minutes, an emergency room visit may be necessary.

—Be cautious of fire hazards when lighting jack-o-lantern candles. You may want to try non-flammable light sources, such as glow sticks or artificial pumpkin lights.

—Make sure that costumes are flame-resistant and fit properly. The costume should not obstruct the child's vision or be too long, causing the child to trip and fall.

—Shoe wear should be sturdy, comfortable and slip-resistant to avoid falls.

—Trick-or-treaters and parents should carry a flashlight to see and be seen. Also, approach only houses that are well lit.

—Be aware of neighborhood dogs when you approach their home, as these pets can impose a threat.

—Having a cell phone is a good idea in case there is an emergency.

For more safety tips for children, refer to www.childrensafetyzone.com.

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