

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Halloween and Día de los Muertos **#MaskUpDC**

The end of the year brings many holidays that are important to the DC community. This document provides guidance for DC residents on ways to have fun and keep our community safe from COVID-19 during the fall celebrations of Halloween and Día de los Muertos.

Any individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or who was recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, **must not attend any in-person Halloween or Día de los Muertos event** due to the risk of exposing others. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.

Celebration Basics

Be socially responsible when planning your activities. Even if you are not at high risk for serious illness with COVID-19, **consider that you could spread the virus to more vulnerable members of your household or community**. Many traditional Halloween and Día de los Muertos activities are high risk for spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 (e.g., traditional door-to-door trick-or-treating, haunted houses, bobbing for apples, singing and dancing, large crowds). To help keep everyone in the community safe, we recommend finding alternative ways to celebrate.

- Keep in mind: The more people you interact with, the more closely you interact with them, and the longer the interactions, the higher your risk of getting and spreading COVID-19.
- Outdoor events are safer than indoor, but there is still a risk of getting and spreading COVID-19. In either setting, avoid crowded settings with poor ventilation.
- Wear a surgical mask or cloth face covering at all times when you leave your home or are around people who are not in your household. **A costume mask does not substitute for a surgical mask or cloth face covering.**
- While gatherings over 50 people are prohibited, please note that the virus spreads even amongst small groups. If you choose to have in-person activities, keep the group as small as possible, and remember to practice social distancing and wear a cloth face covering.
- Remember that bars and nightclubs remain closed, and that large groups moving between restaurants is strongly discouraged.

Safer Holiday Events

Below are some suggestions on how to celebrate Halloween and Día de los Muertos while keeping yourself and those around you safe. Virtual events or activities at home involving only members of your household are safest. For indoor gatherings, improve ventilation by opening doors and windows as much as possible (safety permitting). Attending or creating traditional activities such as haunted houses are strongly discouraged, as screaming and close contact are anticipated and contribute to the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Please remember the following:

- Avoid traveling out of the National Capitol Region to attend holiday events and fall festivals.
- Avoid participating in events that include people from outside of the National Capitol Region.
- If you are hosting guests from outside of the National Capitol Region, guests traveling from high risk states and countries must quarantine for 14 days after arrival in the DC area. For more information, see DC Health Travel Guidance at coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo.

HALLOWEEN

Traditional door-to-door trick-or-treating is strongly discouraged, as it involves close contact with people not from your household. DC Health recommends participating in the lower risk activities and avoiding high risk activities to help decrease the risk of spread of COVID-19 while celebrating Halloween.

Lower risk:

- Decorate your house and yard in a Halloween theme. Have neighborhood drive-through events where families can stay in their cars and view Halloween displays similar to Christmas-light displays.
- Carve pumpkins with your household and display the pumpkins outdoors.
- Decorate your apartment or living space for Halloween.
- Have a “Trick-or-Treat Candy Hunt” with members of your own household.
- Have an online costume party, costume contest or pumpkin carving via video chat.
 - Post your best Family Costume on social media using #HalloweenDC and compete with your friends for the most likes.

Medium risk:

- Participate in one-way trick or treating where individually packaged treat bags are lined up at edge of a yard or for children to grab- and- go one at a time.
- Hold a small group outdoor costume parade and/or contest with social distancing and face coverings.
- Create an open-air, one-way walk-through outdoor Haunted Forest with social distancing. Greater social distancing is necessary if screaming is anticipated.
- Visit pumpkin patches or orchards with social distancing.
- Hold an outdoor small group Halloween movie night with social distancing.
- Participate in or create other events that are held outdoors and allow attendees to stay in their cars or socially distanced.

High risk (AVOID):

- Traditional door-to-door trick-or-treating.
- “Trunk or treating” where children take candy from trunks of cars in large parking lots.
- Taking candy from communal candy bowls.
- Going on hayrides with people not from your household.
- Going to indoor Haunted Houses.
- Bobbing for apples.

DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

Lower risk:

- Prepare favorite recipes of the deceased at home with members of your household.
- Play music at home.
- Create an altar for the deceased at your home.
- Make and decorate masks.
- Hold online virtual celebrations with friends and family.

Medium risk:

- Have a small, outdoor group get-together with social distancing.
- Visit and decorate graves with household members only while social distancing from other groups in the cemetery.
- Host a small dinner party with local friends and family with social distancing.

High risk (AVOID):

- Participating in large indoor celebrations with singing and dancing
- Going to crowded celebrations in a cemetery.

Tips for Safe Treats

- Wipe off candy wrappers with sanitizing wipes before eating or allowing children to eat candy. (NOTE: Never wipe unpackaged food with wipes.)
 - Make sure the wrapper is completely dry before opening.
- Allow children to eat only factory-wrapped treats. Avoid homemade treats made by strangers.
- If giving out candy, do not allow children to select their own candy from a bowl. Consider distributing with sanitized tongs or similar method.
- Use creative ways to distribute treats, such as using a candy “slide” made of PVC pipe. (See bit.ly/3d5pyai).

Everyday Prevention Measures

- **Stay at home if you are sick** or were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- **Practice social distancing.** Keep at least 6 feet of distance between you and other people who are not in your household.
- **Wear a surgical mask or cloth face covering** at all times when you leave your home or are around people who are not in your household.
 - Consider wearing a holiday-themed cloth face covering instead.
 - Wearing a surgical mask or cloth face covering underneath a costume mask could make it difficult to breathe.
 - Masks are not required for children 2 and under.
 - For more information about mask wearing see *Masks and Cloth Face Coverings for the General Public* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance
- Perform frequent hand hygiene (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
 - Bring your own hand sanitizer when you go to seasonal or holiday events.
 - You must use soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.
 - Key times to perform hand hygiene include:
 - Upon arriving to an event or gathering,
 - Before eating food (including trick-or-treat candy),
 - Before and after interacting with others,
 - Before and after preparing or distributing food (including handing out candy),
 - After using the toilet,
 - Before, and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings,
 - After handling another person’s belongings
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing,
- Avoid shaking hands and physical contact with people who don’t live with you. Instead wave and verbally greet people.
- For more information about private gatherings and going out in public see DC Health *Guidance on Private Gatherings* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance and *Deciding to Go Out* at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/deciding-to-go-out.html

Please visit coronavirus.dc.gov for the most current information about COVID-19 in the District of Columbia.