



**For Immediate Release:**

October 30, 2013

## **Be Safe and Healthy This Halloween** Public Health offers tips on nutrition and safety

LOS ANGELES - The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health reminds residents that Halloween can be a great opportunity to enjoy outdoor physical activity while teaching kids important lessons about nutrition and safety.

"Halloween is a great opportunity to teach your children how to have fun, while being safe and healthy," said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. "Teach your children some healthy habits by encouraging physical activity while trick-or-treating, showing your children how to be safe around moving traffic when walking through the neighborhood, and enjoying treats in moderation."

### **Enjoy Physical Activity**

Use trick-or-treating around the neighborhood and Halloween party activities to get your daily dose of physical activity. Children should get at least 60 minutes and adults should get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity daily.

"Trick-or-treating is fun for the whole family. It is a great way to encourage your children to become active and to 'unplug' from TV, video games, and computers and get outside," Dr. Fielding said.

### **Make Candy a Treat, Not a Whole Meal**

Before going out for your trick-or-treating festivities, feed your kids a healthy snack or light-meal. Children carrying an average-size Jack-O-Lantern bucket can fit about 250 pieces of small chocolate bars and candy, which adds up to 9,000 calories (4.5 times the recommended daily amount for a grown person), 200 grams of fat and 1,500 grams of sugar. Additionally, snacking on eight mini-candy bars can contain as much as 506 calories and 31 grams of fat. That is almost the equivalent of a quarter-pound cheeseburger (510 calories, 26 grams of fat).

"Choose less, weigh less," Dr. Fielding said. "Children and adults can unconsciously eat an unhealthy amount of candy and more in one sitting. Take it easy on the sweets after trick-or-treating, most adults need no more than 2,000 calories a day, and most children need even less. Decreasing the amount of calories eaten during each meal or snack can have a great impact on your overall health."

Also, try to provide healthier treats for trick-or-treaters, such as individual packs of raisins or pretzels. Alternative gifts, such as stickers, coloring books or other inexpensive novelties, can be a great way to reward children.



When you get home from trick-or-treating, inspect all treats before eating them for choking hazards and tampering. Eat only factory-wrapped treats and when in doubt, throw it out. If you are throwing a party, offer a variety of fruits, vegetables, and cheeses, as well as non-alcoholic drinks.

### **Ensure Safety on the Streets**

Avoid trick-or-treating alone, have children walk in groups or with a trusted adult. Decorate treat bags with reflective tape and have each child carry a flashlight so vehicle drivers can see them. Teach your kids to always walk on the sidewalk or on the far edge of the road facing traffic, and to use designated crosswalks wherever possible. In addition, have children look in both directions for cars when crossing a street. If the street has a stop light, wait until the cross walk light indicates that it is okay to cross the street.

Keep porches, walkways, and stairs well-lit and clear of candle-lit jack-o'-lanterns, luminaries, and other decorations that could trip people. Place jack-o'-lanterns on sturdy tables, keep them out of reach of pets and small children, and never leave candlelit jack-o'-lanterns unattended.

"Make sure your children know that they should only go to homes that are known or have outside lights for trick-or-treaters," Dr. Fielding said. "If you do not go along for the trick-or-treating, give your child a phone number where you can be quickly reached and show them how to call 9-1-1 if they have an emergency or become lost."

### **Plan Safe Costumes**

Masks, costumes, and shoes should be well-fitted so your child can see, walk and breathe more easily. If your child wears face paint or make-up, test a small area of the skin before applying to make sure they do not have an allergic reaction to the make-up. Accessories such as swords, knives, and similar costumes items should be short, soft, and flexible. Make sure costumes are flame-resistant. Additionally, to lower the risk of eye injury, avoid wearing decorative contact lenses as part of your costume and never share contact lenses with another user.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.

###