



**Tip Sheet: Safer Halloween**

**UPDATED October 20, 2020**

This document was updated from October 2, 2020, to clarify prohibited activities and reflect changes to allowed outdoor gatherings:

- **Prohibited:**
  - **Indoor private gatherings with different households.**
  - **Organizing or coordinating groupings of gatherings at indoor or outdoor spaces at the same time is also prohibited (“simultaneous gatherings”).**
  - **Unauthorized street fairs or festivals such as those that might take advantage of streets that have been closed to support economic activity (such as outdoor dining, outdoor personal services, etc.).**
- **Clarifications to allowed outdoor gatherings:**
  - **As of 10/20/20, all outdoor gatherings are limited to up to 3 households up to a maximum of 25 people.**
  - **For an outdoor meal gathering, the number of people allowed is stricter - 6 people. Sharing a meal with different households is higher risk, since masks cannot be worn while eating.**
  - **All gatherings should be two hours or less. The longer the duration, the greater the risk of COVID-19 transmission.**

The following tip sheet was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health for use by San Francisco residents and will be posted at <http://www.sfgdcp.org>. This tip sheet may change as information is updated.

**AUDIENCE:** General public who are choosing to celebrate Halloween

**BACKGROUND:** Halloween is a cherished holiday with its own important and unique social and community roles. Due to the communal nature of many traditional fall holiday activities, the City of San Francisco wishes to support our residents in celebrating a [Safer Halloween](#) in order to [reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19](#) [see more at [sfgdcp.org/safersocial](http://sfgdcp.org/safersocial)]. This Tip Sheet will provide guidance on which activities are not permitted, as well as offering suggestions on many safer ways to celebrate.

**Halloween Activities Not Permitted During COVID-19**

Do not participate in the following activities, which **are prohibited** by local or state public health orders:



- **Indoor private gatherings among different households.** This includes celebrations, events or parties.
- Outdoor gatherings, at which a **meal and/or drinks are served**, with **more than 6 attendees or more than 3 households**.
- Outdoor gatherings with no food/drink, that include **more than 3 households or more than 25 attendees**. This includes everyone present, including hosts and guests. Remember, the smaller number of people you gather with, the lower your risk of infection.
- Organizing or coordinating groupings of gatherings at indoor or outdoor spaces at the same time ("**simultaneous gatherings**").
- **Unauthorized street fairs or festivals** such as those that might take advantage of streets that have been closed to support economic activity (such as outdoor dining, outdoor personal services, etc.).
- Haunted houses, carnivals, festivals, and live entertainment attractions.

## Halloween Activities Discouraged During COVID-19

These activities are discouraged due their high risk of COVID-19 transmission:

- Traditional door-to-door trick-or-treating or "trunk-or-treating" between cars because it can be difficult to maintain [6 feet of physical distance when multiple households gather on a street or in a space](#), and food sharing can be unsafe
- Traveling to a rural fall festival. Unnecessary travel can spread COVID-19. Festivals are higher risk because people from multiple households are gathered together, and maintaining 6 feet of distance at all times can be difficult.
- Gatherings longer than 2 hours. The longer the duration, the greater the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

## Safer Halloween Activities Permitted

San Francisco DPH encourages these types of safer family and home-based activities, and the use of re-opened and permitted business and social activities:

- **In the home:**
  - Dressing up living space and outdoor areas with Halloween-themed decorations
  - Virtual parties/contests (e.g. costume contests or pumpkin carving)
  - Creating a haunted house in your living space for members of your household
  - Scavenger hunt for hidden treats in your living space for members of your household, rather than going house-to-house
  - Having a scary movie night or other Halloween-themed activities:
    - Dance party with Halloween music
    - Pumpkin carving
    - Face painting
    - Design-your-own mask
    - Creating homemade pumpkin spice hand sanitizer at home



- **Safer outdoor activities:**

- **Remember that outdoors is MUCH safer than indoors**

- Participate in a Halloween scavenger hunt in your neighborhood with a group of **up to 3 households up to a max of 25 people**, while maintaining at least 6 feet of physical distance between people who are not in the same household. Be sure everyone is wearing a face covering over their mouth and nose since participants may accidentally come closer than 6 feet apart while searching for objects.
      - Look for hidden pre-wrapped treats
      - Look for fun Halloween-related objects (e.g. witches, spiderwebs, black cats)
    - Outdoor pumpkin carving
    - Halloween themed meals at outdoor restaurants to support local businesses
    - Although trick-or-treating is discouraged, if you choose to do so, consider laying out individually wrapped goodie bags that are lined up for families to grab and go while continuing to physically distance (such as at the end of a driveway or at the edge of a yard)
      - If you are preparing goodie bags, [wash your hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 second before and after preparing the bags.
    - [Having or attending an outdoor, open-air costume parade](#) with up to **3 households up to a max of 25 people**, where protective masks are used and people can remain more than 6 feet apart
      - A traditional costume mask (such as for Halloween) is not a substitute for a face covering that fits properly over the nose, mouth, and chin. Face coverings can be decorated to be part of a costume. A costume mask should not be used unless it is made of two or more layers of breathable fabric that covers the mouth and nose and doesn't leave gaps around the face.
      - Do not wear a costume mask over a protective cloth mask because it can be dangerous if the costume mask makes it hard to breathe. Instead, consider using a Halloween-themed cloth mask.

- **Please respect your neighbors and your community**

- Some of your neighbors may be uncomfortable celebrating Halloween in any way this year, and we ask that you respect your neighbor's wishes and concerns
    - Everyone is navigating the COVID-19 pandemic to the best of their abilities and has different comfort levels about what is safe to do.

## Always Take Personal Protective Measures

**Regardless of how you choose to celebrate Halloween, it is important to keep the following in mind:**

1. **Face Coverings:** Wear a cloth face covering that securely covers nose and mouth to prevent disease spread when outside your home and around others that are not part of your household.



**Note:** plastic, rubber, vinyl, and other **Halloween costume masks are not acceptable substitute for cloth face-coverings** to prevent COVID-19 spread.

2. **Practice Physical Distancing:** Stay at least 6 feet away (three or more adult steps) from all other people who are not part of your own household, especially when talking, eating, or drinking.
3. **Outdoors is MUCH safer:** Avoid confined spaces, especially indoors.
4. **Good Hygiene:** Wash or sanitize your hands often. Clean high touch items regularly.
5. **Minimize Mixing:** Plan activities to limit mixing between different households. Currently, social gatherings involving more than 3 households or more than 25 people total are prohibited. That means that on Halloween, if you are spending time with others, you must stick with a maximum of 3 households with up to 25 people total, and not mingle with others.
6. **Stay Home If You Are Sick or You are in a High-Risk Group:** If you are sick, or you have been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19 please [get tested](#) and stay home and away from others. [People at higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19](#) (such as older adults, people with chronic medical conditions) are strongly urged to stay home.

## Frequently Asked Questions About Hosting Indoor & Outdoor Events

- **I want to host an outdoor party with food and/or drinks. How many people/households can I invite?** Up to 3 households with 6 attendees max. Sharing a meal with different households is higher risk, since masks cannot be worn while eating.
- **I want to host an outdoor gathering, with no food/drink served. How many people/households can I invite?** Up to 3 households, with a limit of 25 attendees max. The 25-person limit includes everyone present, including hosts and guests. Remember, the smaller the number of people, the safer we keep everyone we care about.
- **I want to host an indoor event. Can I invite people that do not live with me?** No. Indoor private gatherings among different households are prohibited by the State and County.
- **Can I host an indoor event and an outdoor event at the same time, to maximize guest numbers?** No. Remember, the smaller the number of people, the safer for everyone involved. Indoor gatherings are not allowed. It may help to think of this year's celebrations as joyful **and** intimate!

## Resources

- San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH)
  - [sfcdcp.org/covid19](https://sfcdcp.org/covid19)
- City & County of San Francisco (SFGOV)
  - Guidance on safer social interactions during the pandemic: [sfcdcp.org/safersocial](https://sfcdcp.org/safersocial)
  - Tips on safer social interactions during the pandemic: <http://www.sfcdcp.org/covidsafersocial>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



- Fall Holiday celebrations  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html#halloween>
- Hosting Gatherings or cook-outs  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/personal-social-activities.html#gatherings>
- When and how to wash your hands  
<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>
- LA County Public Health
  - Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Celebrating Halloween  
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/docs/community/GuidanceHalloween.pdf>
- Other Bay Area counties
  - **Joint Statement by the Association of Bay Area Health Officers** (posted by Alameda County)
    - Guidance on How to Celebrate Halloween and Día de Los Muertos Safely and Prevent Spreading COVID-19 Among Friends and Neighbors  
<https://covid-19.acgov.org/covid19-assets/docs/press/joint-statement-2020.09.28.pdf>
  - Contra Costa County
    - Contra Costa Health Services Recommends Planning Safe, Planning Ahead for Halloween  
<https://cchealth.org/press-releases/2020/0916-Planning-Safe-Halloween.php>
  - Marin County
    - Guidance for Safer Halloween and Dia de los Muertos Celebrations during COVID-19  
<https://coronavirus.marinhhs.org/guidance-safer-halloween-and-dia-de-los-muertos-celebrations-during-covid-19-pandemic>