



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Monday, September 28, 2020

## **Joint Statement of the Bay Area Health Officers**

### **Local County Health Officials Offer Guidance on How to Celebrate Halloween and Día de Los Muertos Safely and Prevent Spreading COVID-19 Among Friends and Neighbors**

Bay Area health officials remind residents that many commonly celebrated Halloween and Día de Los Muertos activities carry high risk for spreading COVID-19. Focusing on decorations, limiting activities to the people you live with, and virtual costume parties or contests will help keep our communities safe this season, especially our children. Together, we all need to do as much as we can to protect ourselves and those around us.

For instance, trick-or-treating is a high-risk activity, because it increases contact with people outside of your household who may not be as careful about COVID-19 prevention. Parties are high-risk, because mixing among people who don't live in the same home introduces more opportunities for the virus to pass from one person to another. Bay Area contact tracing has shown that gathering and mixing are key contributors to infection.

These holidays are no different from the rest of the year when it comes to reducing the spread of COVID-19. Stay home if you feel sick or have come into close contact with someone who has COVID-19; wear a face covering whenever you leave home; and keep your distance from others (even relatives) who don't live in your household. Remember that being outside is safer than being inside, especially in combination with face covering and keeping your distance. Consider using a themed cloth mask, as a costume mask is not a substitute. Avoid wearing a costume mask over a protective cloth mask because it can be dangerous if the costume mask makes it hard to breathe.

San Mateo County residents are reminded that local and state health officer orders are still in effect. Halloween gatherings, Día de los Muertos celebrations, events or parties with non-household members are not permitted unless they are conducted in compliance with [local and state health orders](#).

Local health officials highly recommend community members participate in lower risk activities to celebrate Halloween and Día de Los Muertos this year:

#### **LOWER RISK: Stay home, keep it small**

- Celebrating Halloween traditions like carving pumpkins or a scavenger hunt-style trick-or-treat search with your household members in your home.
- Visiting an outdoor pumpkin patch, while wearing a mask and maintaining distance from others.



- Carving or decorating pumpkins outside, at least 6 feet apart while wearing masks, with a very small group of neighbors or friends. Fewer people with more distance is safer.
- Having a virtual costume contest.
- Dressing up your house, apartment, living space, yard or car with Halloween decoration or decorating homes with images and objects to honor deceased loved ones.
- Preparing traditional family recipes with members of your household.
- Playing music in your home that your deceased loved ones enjoyed.
- Making and decorating masks or making an altar for the deceased.
- Participating in vehicle-based gatherings that comply with state and local guidance like drive-in movies and drive-through attractions, or car/bike parades where participants do not leave their vehicles.
  - Avoid driving in areas where there are many pedestrians.
  - Spectators should watch from their homes or yards and not gather with people they do not live with.

#### **MODERATE RISK: If you must**

- Participating in one-way trick-or-treating where individually wrapped goodie bags 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)
  - Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 second before and after preparing the bags.
  - Ensure everyone is wearing an appropriate face covering and maintaining a physical distance from others.
  - Everyone participating should bring hand sanitizer and use it frequently AND wash their hands immediately after coming home.
  - Candy shouldn't be eaten while outside the home because that would require both removing the face mask and touching wrappers.
- Having a very small group, outdoor, open-air costume parade or movie night where people are distanced more than 6 feet apart and are wearing masks. Fewer people with more distance is safer.
- Enjoying themed outdoor dining that complies with state and local guidance or takeout.

#### **HIGHER RISK: Please avoid**

- Participating in traditional trick-or-treating where treats are handed to children who go door-to-door. Although this activity is outdoors, it is higher risk because it brings multiple people from different households together.
- Traveling to a rural fall festival that is not in your community if you live in an area with community spread of COVID-19. Doing so can bring COVID-19 into the area and threaten the residents' lives.

If trick-or-treating is occurring in your neighborhood and you are at home and do not want to be disturbed, you may want to post a sign or turn off your porch light.



**VERY HIGH RISK: Not permitted by state and local orders**

- Attending a crowded party held indoors or outdoors. Large gatherings, even if they are outdoors, are high risk for spreading COVID-19 and are associated with many cases throughout the Bay Area.
- Sharing, eating, drinking, speaking loudly or singing amongst others outside of your household.
- Haunted houses or indoor mazes
- Having trunk-or-treat where treats are handed out from trunks of cars lined up in large parking lots.

To further protect yourself and your loved ones, be sure to monitor yourself during the 14 days after these holidays and pay particular attention from days 3 - 7 after the holidays when you are most likely to develop symptoms. If you don't feel well or you learn someone you had close contact with tested positive, get tested immediately and stay home until your appointment and while you wait for your results. To learn more about symptoms and testing, visit <https://www.smcgov.org/testing>.

LINK

[San Mateo County Health Officer Guidance for Safer Halloween & Día de los Muertos Celebrations during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

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