



BC Children's Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, provides expert care for the province's most seriously ill or injured children, including newborns and adolescents. Children's is an academic health centre affiliated with the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and the Child & Family Research Institute. For more information, please visit www.bcchildrens.ca.

The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians. For more information, please visit www.phsa.ca.

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Halloween safety tips from BC Children's Hospital October 18, 2007

Vancouver, B.C. – Halloween is a time when children are at higher risk for preventable injuries like falls, burns from fireworks, cuts, choking and injuries involving cars.

In 2004-2005, the majority of Halloween injuries seen at BC Children's Hospital were caused by handling fireworks. These included injuries to eyes, burns to skin, and fingertip amputation. Children are often injured when they pick up a firework that has failed to ignite, only to have it explode in their hand minutes later.

Many parents may not be aware that it's illegal for anyone under 18 to use fireworks (except sparklers) in most B.C. municipalities. This is because fireworks are unpredictable and contribute to significant personal and property damage. If your family enjoys fireworks, check out community firework events that are overseen by professionals.

Children also enjoy more candies and sweets at Halloween. Serious choking episodes can occur, some requiring surgery. Choking is most frequent among children under three years of age, but caution should be exercised with children up to six years of age. Nuts, candies, popcorn and grapes are some of the foods that pose a high risk of choking for young children.

BC Children's doctor Jeff Ludemann suggests that, "Children should not eat nuts or raw carrots, apples or pears until they are at least 3 years old and able to chew and swallow crusty bread without choking." He also reminds parents to ensure that children are sitting down when they eat, not walking or playing.

"Coins and disc batteries can become stuck in the esophagus and are the most common reason we have to take a patient to the operating room for choking," says Dr. Ludemann. "Disc batteries can cause serious injury and/or death."

Dr. Ludemann suggests that all parents and caregivers learn what to do in a choking emergency, because the correct response during a choking incident can save a child's life.

Safe Start, the injury prevention program of BC Children's Hospital, has some safety tips to ensure everyone stays safe while 'trick or treating' in the neighbourhood:

- A costume should not be longer than knee length to ensure children don't trip or fall while walking up and down stairs. Don't let little children wear high heels. Make sure children are carrying flashlights, especially if their costume is made of a dark, non-reflective material.

- Make sure children can see out of any costume. It's best for a young child not to wear a mask or head piece that reduces their vision.
- Inspect each Halloween treat bag carefully and remove any treats that look like they may have been opened, tampered with, or pose a choking hazard.
- Parents should monitor a child's internet use because information on homemade explosives and fireworks is readily available on some sites.

For safety tips and information on making your home safe for your child, call Safe Start Toll Free at 1-888-331-8100.

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