



HALLOWEEN SAFETY GUIDANCE:

Guidance for Safer Halloween & Día de los Muertos Celebrations

10/07/2020

This guidance outlines safer ways to celebrate Halloween and Día de los Muertos during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 virus continues to circulate in communities within San Benito County causing severe illness, hospitalizations and deaths among our residents. Individuals can spread COVID-19 even without symptoms. While the primary means of spread involves droplets created by coughing, sneezing and talking, aerosols caused by normal breathing and virus particles on hard surfaces can also spread COVID-19.

When it comes to reducing the spread of COVID-19, Halloween/Día de los Muertos is no different than the rest of the year. This ongoing risk requires everyone to follow necessary precautions. Reducing close contact with individuals outside your household, wearing face coverings, practicing hand hygiene, and staying home when not feeling well are all important measures to slow the spread.

Consider using a Halloween-themed cloth face covering, as a costume mask is not a substitute. Avoid wearing a costume mask over a protective cloth face covering because it can be dangerous if the costume mask makes it hard to breathe.

Many traditional holiday activities promote congregating and mixing of households, which increase the risk of transmitting COVID-19. For this reason, San Benito County Public Health recommends that you choose a safer alternative way to celebrate Halloween and Día de los Muertos and strongly discourages trick-or-treating. It is important to plan early and identify safer options.

SAFER ALTERNATIVES FOR HALLOWEEN:

The safest way to celebrate Halloween is to spend time with people in the same household or to celebrate virtually. Some specific alternatives that are low risk but still capture the holiday fun include:

- Creating a haunted house or candy scavenger hunt in your home for members of your household, rather than going house-to-house.
- Having a scary movie night or Halloween-themed activities (pumpkin carving, face painting) at home.
- Participating in online parties or contests (e.g., costume or pumpkin carving).
- Dressing up homes and yards with Halloween-themed decorations.
- Participate in a Halloween scavenger hunt in your neighborhood and look for Halloween-related objects (e.g. witches, spider webs, black cats) while maintaining social distance from people from outside your household.
- Car parades that comply with public health guidance for vehicle-based parades including:
 - * Drive-by events or contests where individuals dress up or decorate their vehicles.
 - * Drive-through events where individuals remain in their vehicles and drive through an area with Halloween displays.
 - * Drive -by events where individuals can receive a treat bag (limited to commercially packaged non-perishable treats) or take away item(s) from an organizer while the participants remain in their vehicle.

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- Halloween movie nights at drive-in theaters (must comply with the <https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-family-entertainment-en.pdf>).
- Halloween-themed meals at outdoor restaurants (must comply with the <https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-outdoor-restaurants-en.pdf>).
- Halloween-themed art installations at an outdoor museum (must comply with the <https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-outdoor-museums-en.pdf>).
- Seasonal outdoor activity, such as a pumpkin patch, where use of masks and hand sanitizer is enforced, and people can maintain social distancing.

SAFER ALTERNATIVES FOR DIA DE LOS MUERTOS:

The safest way to celebrate Día de los Muertos is to spend time with people in the same household or to celebrate virtually. Some specific alternatives that are low-risk include:

- Decorating your home with images and objects to honor your deceased loved ones.
- Preparing traditional family recipes.
- Playing music in your home that your deceased loved ones enjoyed.
- Making and decorating masks or making an altar for the deceased.
- Joining a virtual get-together celebration.
- Visiting and decorating graves of loved ones with household members only and keeping more than 6 feet away from others who may be in the area.

HIGHER RISK ACTIVITIES THAT ARE STRONGLY DISCOURAGED:

Avoid these higher risk activities to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19:

- Door to door trick-or-treating is not recommended because it can be very difficult to maintain proper social distancing on porches and at front doors, ensure that everyone answering or coming to the door is appropriately masked to prevent disease spread, and it involves touching high contact surfaces such as doorbells and candy bowls.
- “Trunk or treating” where children go from car to car instead of door to door to receive treats is also not recommended, since it is difficult to avoid crowding and sharing food.

HIGHER RISK ACTIVITIES THAT ARE NOT PERMITTED:

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

- Halloween gatherings, Día de los Muertos celebrations, events or parties with non-household members are not permitted.
- Carnivals, festivals, live entertainment, and haunted house attractions are not permitted.
- Having a large dinner party with people from different households coming from different geographic locations.
- Attending large indoor celebrations with singing or chanting. 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.

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PERSONAL PROTECTION MEASURES:

Regardless of how you choose to celebrate Halloween/ Día de los Muertos 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. Please note plastic, rubber, vinyl, and other Halloween costume masks are not acceptable substitute for cloth face-coverings to prevent COVID-19 spread.
2. **Practice Social Distancing:** Stay at least 6 feet away (3 or more adult steps) from all other people who are not part of your own household, especially when talking, eating, drinking and singing.
3. **Outdoors is 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.
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 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.

PLEASE RESPECT YOUR NEIGHBORS AND YOUR COMMUNITY:

Everyone is navigating the COVID-19 pandemic to the best of their abilities and has different comfort levels about what is safe to do. Some of your neighbors may be more restrictive than these guidelines and we ask that you respect your neighbor's wishes and concern

TESTING:

After Halloween/ *Día de los Muertos*, self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms. If you have signs or symptoms of COVID-19, please seek care from your medical provider or contact the hospital emergency department. If you are concerned about a close exposure (less than 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) and would like to be tested, wait 7-14 days after the **last** exposure and seek testing at the OptumServe testing site in Hollister. You can register for testing at <https://lhi.care/covidtesting> or by calling 1-888-634-1123.

For more information about COVID-19, go to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>, call 211 or text "COVID19" to 211211 or visit the San Benito County Public Health Services website at <https://hhsa.cosb.us/public-health/>.

KNOW WHERE TO GET RELIABLE INFORMATION:

Beware of scams, false news and hoaxes surrounding novel coronavirus. Accurate information, including announcements of new cases in San Benito County, can be found on the Public Health Services website at <https://hhsa.cosb.us/public-health/>. You can also follow Public Health Services on Facebook or Twitter @PublicHealthSBC.

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Other reliable sources of information about novel coronavirus are:

- California Department of Public Health (CDPH, State)
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, National)
<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>
- State of California Blueprint for a Safer Economy
<https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/>

For local questions or concerns you can email publichealthreferral@cosb.us or call 831-636-4113.

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