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CDC Says “Trick-or-treating” Is “High-Risk” in Guidance for Remaining 2020 Holidays

Right on schedule, the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC) has announced that traditional “trick-or-treating” is “high risk” and has advised Americans to avoid the activity this Halloween, raising concerns that overzealous mayors and governors may seize on the guidance and issue edicts that once again restrict the American way of life.

The guidance, released on Monday, addresses virtually all of the upcoming fall and winter celebrations and holidays in the remainder of 2020, including Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Halloween, Día de los Muertos, Navratri, Diwali, Thanksgiving, Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe, Hannukah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, and New Year’s.

“As many people in the United States begin to plan for fall and winter holiday celebrations,” the guidance begins, “CDC offers the following considerations to help protect individuals, their families, friends, and communities from COVID-19.”

It begins by encouraging Americans to continue to practice mitigating activities such as frequent hand-washing, social distancing, mask wearing, avoiding travel where possible, and, of course, getting the flu vaccine.

The guidance then proceeds to provide specifics revolving around the celebration of Halloween, Dia de los Muertos, and Thanksgiving.

According to the CDC, the following Halloween activities are deemed “high-risk:”

Traditional door-to-door trick-or-treating

- Trunk-or-treating, in which treats are handed out from trunks of cars in parking lots, an activity that is often hosted by community centers and churches
- Indoor Halloween parties or Haunted Houses
- Traveling to attend fall festivals
- Going on hayrides with people outside of the household

“Moderate-risk” activities allow for trick-or-treating but call for social distancing and outdoor gatherings only.

Alternatively, the CDC suggests low-risk ways to celebrate Halloween, all of which involve remaining indoors: pumpkin carving, virtual costume contests, Halloween scavenger hunts inside of the home, watching a Halloween-themed movie, and decorating living spaces with Halloween-themed décor.





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“These considerations are meant to supplement — not replace — any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which holiday gatherings must comply,” the guidance adds. “When planning to host a holiday celebration, you should assess current COVID-19 levels in your community to determine whether to postpone, cancel, or limit the number of attendees.”

Of course, the CDC’s announcement also discouraged Americans from replacing their cloth masks with Halloween masks, even as studies have shown cloth masks to [increase](#) rates of respiratory infection and are [ineffective](#) against influenza-like respiratory illnesses spread by droplets and aerosol particles.

“Do not use a costume mask as a substitute for a cloth mask unless it is made of two or more layers of breathable fabric that covers your mouth and nose and doesn’t leave gaps around your face,” the CDC said, adding, “Do not wear a costume mask over a cloth mask because it can be dangerous if the costume mask makes it hard to breathe. Instead, consider using a Halloween-themed cloth mask.”

The Dia de los Muertos guidance is similar, with indoor activities involving close communing deemed “high-risk,” outdoor gatherings to celebrate the deceased considered “moderate-risk,” and indoor events involving only the residents of a single household and virtual gatherings labeled “low-risk.”

As for Thanksgiving, the CDC warns against shopping in crowded stores in the days leading up to Thanksgiving, participating in crowded events such as parades and races, and attending large indoor gatherings. “Moderate-risk” activities allow for small outdoor gatherings with close family and friends within the community, and “low-risk” activities once again include small communal gatherings of single-household family members and virtual group events.

Though the CDC did not specifically address Christmas in its guidance, one would assume that what’s applicable for the specified holidays applies to Christmas as well.

What cities and states will do with this information remains to be seen. According to a survey from the National Retail Federation, 23 percent of Americans have said they plan to [participate](#) in trick-or-treating this year, just a slight decrease from last year (29 percent). Sadly, some cities have already canceled trick-or-treating, according to Fox News, including Springfield, Massachusetts, and downtown West Chicago. Los Angeles County has recently walked back its September 8 ban on trick-or-treating, but has advised against participation.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, who has been recently [criticized](#) for his handling of the pandemic, [assured](#) New Yorkers last week he did not intend to ban trick-or-treating, but would issue some guidance to govern how it should be done. With the CDC’s latest guidance, however, it’s uncertain whether his stance will remain unchanged. New Yorkers and Americans all across the country are still reeling from New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio’s announcement earlier this month that the traditional, iconic Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade will be [cancelled](#) this year, due to COVID-19.

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Raven Clabough acquired her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English at the University of Albany in upstate New York. She currently lives in Pennsylvania and has been a writer for The New American since 2010.



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