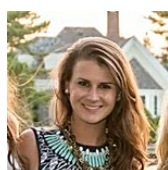


An ER Doctor Says Traditional Trick-or-Treating May Lead to a Spike in COVID-19 Cases



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200 Shares



In case you missed it, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) released [a list of Halloween activities ranked by safety](#). And while it breaks our hearts to say so, it looks like trick-or-treating is off

the table this year. Of course, there are [plenty of ways to celebrate with the kids amid the pandemic](#), however, [Dr. Matt Lambert](#), an emergency medicine physician and the chief medical information officer for the HCI Group, is encouraging parents to skip traditional trick-or-treating this Halloween for good reason. Read on to learn why.

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The Timing of Halloween Isn't Great

While we love to see the leaves change colors and often welcome the cool fall weather, colder days usually mean an uptick in illnesses. "It's really just the timing of Halloween given it's at the end of October," Dr. Lambert told POPSUGAR. "We're going into the fall with [between 30,000 and 40,000 new cases per day in the US](#), so we can expect a 'seasonality' with COVID-19 — as I've started calling it — and that takes into effect how the virus behaves in colder weather and how humans behave in colder weather. In general, the risk has to do with where Halloween falls on the calendar. We're going to be on the steep part of the curve again [at that point]."

COVID-19 Cases Have Been Spiking After Holidays

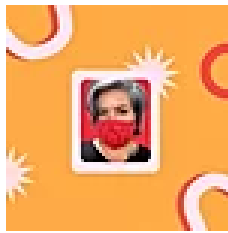
Since the pandemic hit the US in March, [cases of COVID-19 have consistently spiked after each major holiday](#). Although we understand that families may be apprehensive about forgoing their family traditions, it's in everyone's best interest to do so. And yes, unfortunately, that means no trick-or-treating in the traditional sense.

"The goal is to keep the caseload manageable so we avoid having to make some really tough decisions."

"It takes about two weeks for the virus to incubate and for doctors to turn around tests," Dr. Lambert explained. "We've seen increasing numbers of cases about two weeks after every major holiday. It's something that happened after the July 4 and Labor Day weekends. As we get into colder weather, there are going to be more cases, and eventually, we're going to see a spike again in hospitalizations and in deaths. And that's been the goal [with social distancing], remember? We're trying to avoid having more critically ill people than we have resources."

Of course, Dr. Lambert wants families to enjoy the holiday as much as possible. However, he wants to underscore that safety should be the top priority right now, especially because while children may be [less likely to experience severe COVID outcomes](#), they have a higher likelihood of becoming asymptomatic carriers of the virus. "The goal is not to squelch any fun," he said. "The goal is to keep the caseload manageable so we avoid having to make some really tough decisions."

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Flu Season Can Make Diagnosing COVID-19 Cases Tricky

Although many public places around the US are beginning to open back up again, [some experts are worried about a twindemic](#), or the potential convergence of our annual flu season with an expected "second wave" of coronavirus cases in the fall and winter. "[The flu \[kills\] around 40,000 people a year](#)," Dr. Lambert said, noting that flu season is six months out of the year beginning in December. "The number of flu cases will likely stay the same, and the number of coronavirus cases will continue to increase."

Because the symptoms for the flu and the coronavirus are similar, diagnosing each condition can be particularly hard for doctors. Moreover, because the [coronavirus is thought to be 10 times as deadly as the flu](#), doctors can never be too careful.

"Patients just know they have the respiratory symptoms and a fever, so it can be really challenging to manage them when they first come into the hospital," he explained. "When the virus first hit, it was still flu season. Early on, if you tested positive for the flu, we didn't even do a coronavirus test, so it just really makes everything more complicated. It increases the toll on the healthcare system because you have to

treat everyone like they have coronavirus, which creates spacing and distancing issues, among other things."

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What Should Families Do on Halloween Then?

Along with wearing a mask, social distancing, and using an ample amount of hand sanitizer, Dr. Lambert recommends going into Halloween with a positive attitude and trying to get creative. "We're probably going to be talking about this year for the rest of our lives," Dr. Lambert said matter-of-factly. "I think it's an opportunity to try something new, and we can look back and say, 'Remember that year during COVID when we did X on Halloween?' I think there's a real opportunity here for families to turn this experience into a memory of the year they did something different on Halloween."

Understandably, what activities your family engages in greatly depends on where you live. "If you live in a community that has a five percent or less connectivity rate and you want to try a 'modified Halloween,' I think it's completely reasonable," Dr. Lambert said. "I'm confident saying that the virus is significantly more transmitted through the air than through contact. You want to minimize interactions with groups of kids, so I think leaving a bowl of candy and some hand sanitizer out is a pretty reasonable thing to do. For

places that have that higher prevalence of COVID-19 cases, I don't think leaving candy out is a good idea."