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Halloween Safety Tips for the Elderly

For most of us Halloween holds childhood memories of dressing up, carving pumpkins and going door to door for candy and treats. And for many of our Elderly population this memory expands to giving out candy and treats to the costumed children at their door. However for some with Dementia and/or Physical limitations; Halloween may hold negative feelings and fear that can contribute to negative behaviors leading up to and on Halloween itself. In addition the security and safety factor of having strangers coming to the door in the twilight and evening hours is not conducive to a safe environment for elderly living alone. Keeping our elderly population as safe as possible on Halloween while still enjoying the holiday in their own way can be possible with a few considerations and interventions. To continue enjoying life safely is the goal!

My mother was one of those treat givers that the children loved to visit. She enjoyed watching the little faces and would open her door to anyone, even long into the late hours. Without going further you can imagine what real risks there are for an elderly woman alone opening her door up at night to total strangers. For my mother, the joy of giving out candy continued when she live in a secure community where children were invited, safety measures were followed and the doors were locked and staff protected her into the night. She continued to enjoy Halloween without previous risks.

On Halloween there can be an increase of safety and security concerns for elderly who live alone, and especially those with Dementia and/or Physical limitations. Contributing factors may include; decorations, falling leaves, wet pavements, decreased daylight hours, change in weather conditions, and more. Some of these risks can be avoided or minimized by carefully considering what adjustments can be made. This is by no means an exhaustive or complete approach to safety or recommendations, but instead just a few considerations as you prepare for Halloween with an Elderly person.

Halloween Safety Tips for the Elderly

-  Keep all floors, entry ways and porches free of decorations.
-  Add night lights to hallways, walkways and rooms, and keep well lit.
-  Avoid window decorations that block light or view of front entry.
-  Use only safe pumpkin carving tools, light pumpkin with flameless votive.
-  Place carved pumpkins outside to keep decaying smell and bugs outside.
-  Spend the evening with them, be available to help answer door, keep them safe.
-  When done with candy, or at dusk: Put sign on door, "Sorry No More Candy".
-  There is debate on turning off porch light, which can increase security risk.
-  **Don't leave an elderly person with Dementia or physical limitations home alone on Halloween...**
-  Take them to a community event or family home, and return home after dusk.
-  Send a companion or [professional](#) to be with them from 4:00-10:00 or overnight.
-  Help them answer door and hand out candy if they wish.
-  Put out sign when done "Sorry No More Candy".
-  Watch movie or listen to music in another room away from front door if possible.
-  Be prepared; books, albums, crafts, favorite foods, etc. to enjoy and distract.
-  Follow dietary instructions; avoid over indulgence of chocolate or sugar.
-  Remember Halloween may not be a happy time for elderly with Dementia and may be scary, or create added stimulation from doorbell, knocks, noise outside. Be sensitive to what they can tolerate and do your best to keep them safe and enjoy the evening with you.

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