

NEWS RELEASE

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ENJOY A SAFE AND HAPPY HALLOWEEN

Soon it will be the night of scary ghosts and goblins when kids put on their favorite costume and hit the streets in search of treats. No matter what age, Halloween is a favorite holiday for many people. However you celebrate the holiday, make sure it is safe.

- Wear brightly colored costumes that feature reflective materials for visibility at night.
- Allow your child freedom of expression with their costume but be careful about outfits that are too long or that cover the face. Masks can make it difficult for kids to see and breathe, but if a mask is worn, it should be removed while walking from house to house.
- Avoid high-heeled shoes, as well as baggy skirts, pants or sleeves that could cause your child to catch on something or fall. Make sure that any props your child carries, such as wands or swords, are flexible.
- Make sure you know the neighborhood you are trick-or-treating in. Avoid neighborhoods where you do not know the people who live there.
- Caution children about running through dark yards that could cause them to trip over obstructions. Homeowners can help by clearing their yards of obstructions. Always carry a flashlight or glow stick and walk (don't run) on the left hand side of the street, facing the traffic.
- More experienced kids may be able to strike out on their own, but they need a specific route. If they're unaccompanied by an adult, ensure that they have a watch and perhaps a cell phone. Designate a return time.

- Consider using a glow stick in your jack-o-lantern as a safer alternative to open flames. But if you use candles, place the lit pumpkin away from walkways and decorations that might blow into the path of a flame.

Treats are another big part of Halloween fun, but they don't always have to be sticky candy. Nutrition and Halloween aren't two words that normally go together, but it's possible to promote healthy eating habits even during the Halloween season.

Think beyond the traditional candy bars, suckers and gum. Great treat offerings include Halloween magnets, erasers, pencils, temporary tattoos and rubber spiders or insect jewelry. Offering non-food treats is healthier for the trick-or-treater.

If you do choose edible treats, consider handing out packages of peanut butter or cheese and crackers, sugar-free gum, small packages of raisins or other dried fruits. You might consider giving out bite-sized versions of larger candy items or granola bars. Individual packages of popcorn are also great for older children.

If you want to have a party at your home, you can hold a pumpkin party for your child and their friends a few days before Halloween. That way, their pumpkin creations can be enjoyed in advance before the big day.

For more information on pumpkins or alternative treats, contact the Howard County Extension Office at 870-845-7517 or visit our office located on the second floor of the courthouse.

Recipe of the Week

Start your Halloween weekend off with delicious pancakes. These fluffy, pumpkin pancakes are tasty, and kids will love them! Top them with sliced banana or applesauce as an alternative to syrup.

Perfect Pumpkin Pancakes

2 cups flour

6 teaspoons brown sugar

1 Tablespoon baking powder

1 ¼ teaspoons pumpkin pie spice

1 teaspoon salt

1 egg

½ cup canned pumpkin

1 ¾ cups low-fat milk

2 Tablespoons vegetable oil

Combine flour, brown sugar, baking powder, pumpkin pie spice and salt in a large mixing bowl.

In a medium bowl, combine egg, canned pumpkin, milk, and vegetable oil, mixing well. Add wet ingredients to flour mixture, stirring just until moist. Batter may be lumpy. (For thinner batter, add more milk.)

Lightly coat a griddle or skillet with cooking spray and heat on medium. Using a ¼ cup measure, pour batter onto hot griddle. Cook until bubbles begin to burst, then flip pancakes and cook until golden brown, 1 ½ to 2 ½ minutes. Repeat with remaining batter.

Yield: 1 dozen 3 ½ inch pancakes

Nutrition information per pancake: 130 calories, 3g fat, 354 mg sodium, 21g carbohydrates, 1g fiber, 4g protein. Good source of calcium and potassium.

Note: You can make your own pumpkin pie spice. Just combine $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon cinnamon, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon nutmeg, and $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon each of ginger and cloves.

Safety Tip: You will know your griddle is hot enough for pancakes by sprinkling a few (3 or 4) drops of water on the surface of the pan. If they dance and sizzle, you are ready to cook. Be sure handles of skillets and pans are always turned toward the center or back of the stove, to prevent the pan from catching on hands or clothes and causing burns.