

Health unit offers advice on trick-or-treating safely this year

Premier Doug Ford has advised against door-to-door trick-or-treating in COVID-19 hotspots such as Toronto, Peel, York Region and Ottawa but Simcoe Muskoka is in the clear.

In areas permitted to engage in the activity, Simcoe Muskoka Medical Officer of Health Dr. Charles Gardner offered advice on how to do so safely.

"First off, it is always an option to not participate in Halloween, that would be the safest option, both in terms of trick or treating and providing candy," he said.

"Certainly, if you have concerns, in particular about your health and have risk factors that put you at a higher risk, that would be all the more reason not to participate."

For those who do participate, he said it's important that people stick to their household, in terms of who they trick-or-treat with and do not gather in large groups.

"You need to maintain your physical distance from all other people. You need to be doing hand hygiene and self monitoring and self isolation if you develop symptoms," said Dr. Gardner.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) published advice stating that both trick-or-treaters and individuals handing out candy should wear a face mask and costume masks aren't suitable as a face covering.

They advise building a face covering into your child's costume instead of placing one under a costume mask as it may create difficulty with breathing.

The SMDHU also noted it's important for children to line up two meters apart if lining up at a home's doorsteps.

Other advice includes avoiding high touch surface and objects, not leaving treats in a communal bucket or bowl for children to grab and to consider using tongs or a similar tool to hand out treats.

As well, whether people are collecting or handing out treats they should wash their hands often and thoroughly or use hand sanitizer, said Dr. Gardner.

By Sam Odrowski Local Journalism Initiative Reporter