



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Halloween Doesn't Need to be a Dangerous Night for Children
Child pedestrian deaths double on Halloween night

Belleville, Ill – On a potentially dangerous night of the year for child pedestrians, St. Elizabeth's Hospital and the physicians of the HSHS Medical Group urge parents to prepare children to act safely and drivers to take extra precautions. On average, twice as many kids are killed while walking on Halloween compared to other days of the year.

"Kids need proper safety instruction before they go out trick-or-treating," said Dr. Loren Hughes, of Family and Internal Medicine in Collinsville. "Many kids will be out trick-or-treating while it is dark when it is more difficult for drivers to see them. There are several easy and effective behaviors that parents can share with kids to help reduce their risk of injury. For example, children younger than age 12 should not be alone crossing streets on Halloween without an adult. If older kids are mature enough to go trick-or-treating without adult supervision, parents should make sure they go in a group and stick to a predetermined route with good lighting."

Drivers need to be extra alert as there will be more children on the streets and sidewalks – and those kids may be focused on gathering candy and the excitement of the holiday rather than being careful while crossing streets. "We urge drivers to slow down on neighborhood roads to make Halloween more enjoyable for everyone, but also to help save lives," added Hughes.

Safety tips for kids & parents:

- **Cross the street safely at corners**, using traffic signals and crosswalks. Look left, right and left again when crossing and keep looking as you cross. Walk, don't run, across the street.

- **Walk on sidewalks or paths.** If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic as far to the left as possible. Children should walk on direct routes with the fewest street crossings.
- **Slow down and stay alert.** Watch out for cars that are turning or backing up and never dart out into the street or cross in between parked cars.
- **Costumes can be both creative and safe.** Decorate costumes and bags with reflective tape or stickers and, if possible, choose light colors. Masks can obstruct a child's vision, so choose non-toxic face paint and make-up whenever possible instead. Have kids carry glow sticks or flashlights in order to see better, as well as be seen by drivers.

Safety tips for drivers:

- **Slow down** in residential neighborhoods. Remember that popular trick-or-treating hours are 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- **Be especially alert** and take extra time to look for kids at intersections, on medians and on curbs. Children are excited on Halloween and may move in unpredictable ways.
- **Reduce any distractions** inside your car, such as talking on the phone or eating, so you can concentrate on the road and your surroundings.

While pedestrian safety is a main concern on Halloween, parents and kids should also be careful when dealing with candy. "While kids never want to wait to dive into their candy, it is best to check sweets for signs of tampering before children are allowed to eat them," said Hughes. "Remind children to only eat treats in original and unopened wrappers."

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About Hospital Sisters Health System

Hospital Sisters Health System is a Roman Catholic health care mission founded to continue the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. Sponsored by the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, HSHS provides state-of-the-art health care framed in traditional values taught by St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. It is dedicated to serving all people, including the poor and the needy, at each of its 13 Local Systems and physician practices in Illinois (Belleville, Breese, Decatur, Effingham, Highland, Litchfield, Springfield and Streator) and Wisconsin (Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Sheboygan and two in Green Bay). For more information about HSHS, visit www.hshs.org.