



Document: Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation (SBAR)  
Topic: Halloween  
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To: Provincial/local public health officials

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## Recommendations

*Please ensure to also follow your local public health recommendations.*

### Trick-or-Treating

- If you are feeling unwell, please stay home.
- Trick-or-Treat with only your family members or a few close friends you already spend time with.
- Be sure to:
  - Wear a mask; incorporate it into your costume if possible;
  - Ensure physical distancing (2 meters); and
  - Wash your hands before and after Trick-or-Treating.
- When approaching a house, have patience and wait for the group ahead of you to leave before approaching. Do not crowd the doorstep and stand two meters away. Knock on the door (avoid using the doorbell) or play a pre-recorded 'Trick-or-Treat' audio on your phone.
- After Trick-or-Treating, and prior to eating any treats, be sure to wash your hands.

### Handing Out Candy

- If feeling unwell, please do not hand out candy.
- Only one person per household who is vaccinated should hand out treats for Trick-or-Treaters.
- When handing out candy:
  - Wear a mask;
  - Wash your hands frequently;
  - Use tongs to hand out candy or hand out individual candy bags; and
  - Only offer store-bought, individually wrapped candy.
- If weather permits, sit outside and place individual candy or candy bags on a table for children to take.
- Frequently sanitize high-touch areas including the doorbell, doorknob, and handrails for general hygiene and to protect against any viruses.



## Halloween Parties

- Overall, gatherings should be kept small, especially if children under the age of 12 are present. Get together in small groups with households you frequently socialize with and ensure everyone is fully vaccinated.
- If weather permits, gather outside.
- If you are indoors:
  - Open windows and ensure good ventilation;
  - Maintain physical distancing (2 meters);
  - Avoid sharing food and drinks;
  - Consult the local public health unit or area for any gathering limits; and
  - Limit gatherings, whether they are in a home or in public places (e.g., bars and restaurants), to those who are fully vaccinated.
- Consider taking part in other outdoor Halloween festivities (e.g., corn maze or pumpkin patch) instead of gathering inside.
- **In-school Halloween parties:** Keep children within classroom cohorts. Offer store-bought pre-packaged treats instead of homemade Halloween baked goods.

## Areas with High Community COVID-19 Prevalence and/or Low Vaccine Uptake

- Prior to Halloween, be sure to read the advice and recommendations from [local public health officials](#).
- Be mindful of the prevalence of COVID-19 in your community. If deemed very high by public health authorities, avoid having indoor gatherings of any type.
- Consider alternatives to Trick-or-Treating, such as reverse Trick-or-Treating, which includes having vaccinated friends and family drop off candy at your door or consider going to friends and families houses and asking them to leave candy bags outside for a non-contact activity.
- Consider other alternatives to Trick-or-Treating, such as a Halloween *piñata*, a stay-at-home movie night, baking Halloween treats at home, or a Halloween scavenger hunt.
- If unvaccinated, avoid having indoor gatherings of any type.

## Situation

The second Halloween of the COVID-19 pandemic is around the corner amid a fourth wave driven by the Delta variant. With 71% percent of the total population fully vaccinated for COVID-19 across Canada as of October 2, 2021, Canadians need to be aware that Halloween does present risks of increased SARS-CoV-2 transmission, which could potentially lead to COVID-19 outbreaks.

Halloween is a concern given that the highest number of COVID cases in Canada (20.2%) are among those 19 years old or younger – the age group most likely to take part in Trick-or-Treating festivities (9). The second highest number of COVID cases belongs to the 20-29 age group – another age group that often participates in close-contact Halloween activities such as social gatherings or going out to bars and night clubs (9). Without safeguard measures,



Halloween could pose an issue and contribute to COVID-19 transmission due to the aforementioned activities.

Halloween can be done safely. This document provides guidance as to how to ensure a safe Halloween (1).

## Background

- Canada is currently undergoing a fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, largely driven by the Delta variant (99.7% of cases as of September 12, 2021) (2). The highest percentage of cases in Canada (20.4%) is currently represented by those 19 years or younger, with those aged 20-29 representing the second highest percentage (19.3%) infected (2).
- As of October 2, 2021, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Nunavut have the lowest uptake of vaccines among the 12-17 age group. A table illustrating vaccine uptake by province/territory and age can be found in Appendix A.
- The fourth wave is impacting regions differently across Canada. Vaccine uptake is varied across provinces/territories and age groups. Public health restrictions are also varied across the country. As of October 11, 2021, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the Northwest Territories have the highest prevalence rates of COVID-19 over the last seven days (8). This data will change prior to the date of Halloween festivities. Therefore, local public health officials must continue to keep a close eye on case rates and make Halloween recommendations that are appropriate to the local COVID-19 situation.
- The province of Manitoba has released guidelines for Halloween 2021 [here](#). The guidelines include details on Trick-or-Treating and Halloween activities, physical distancing, masking, hand hygiene, treat distribution, Trick-or-Treating safety, and other activities.
- The Retail Council of Canada summarized the provincial and territorial public health guidelines for last year's Halloween, during the pandemic in 2020 [here](#).
- There have been many Halloween celebration ideas suggested within grey literature that do not involve traditional Trick-or-Treating, including but not limited to the following:
  - Have a virtual pumpkin carving or painting contest (4)
  - Make Halloween-themed food and treats with your kids (5)
  - Have an in-house Halloween candy scavenger hunt or *piñata* for your kids (5,6)
  - Set up a driveway table with individual bags or cups of candy (6)
  - Plan a Halloween movie night (4)
  - Plan a neighborhood Halloween parade (4)
  - Reverse Trick-or-Treating: have your vaccinated neighbors drop off candy for your children at your door in a contactless fashion (4)



## Assessment

- Halloween activities recommended by local public health authorities should vary depending on vaccine uptake and local COVID-19 prevalence (7).
- Trick-or-Treating, while adhering to appropriate public health measures and in communities with low community COVID-19 prevalence rates, can be done safely and still limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Handing out candy is another activity that, with the proper use of public health measures, can be done safely. For example, the use of tongs, masks, and pre-packaged candy can help limit the spread of COVID-19.
- In areas in which there are high rates of COVID-19 and/or low vaccination rates, alternative options should be considered as traditional Halloween festivities could lead to increased transmission and outbreaks.
- Gathering for Halloween parties is dependent on whether the individuals attending the party are fully vaccinated, as well as local community prevalence rates of COVID-19.
- Bars and night clubs should implement a proof of vaccination policy. Individuals should choose locations with the policy in place.

## Appendix A: Vaccine Uptake Across Canada by Age as of October 2, 2021

(8)

Jurisdiction	Vaccine uptake by age	
BC	12-17	73.38%
	18-29	74.61%
	30-39	76.27%
AB	12-17	64.77%
	18-29	63.72%
	30-39	66.88%
SK	12-17	62.87%
	18-29	61.87%
	30-39	66.39%
MB	12-17	69.87%
	18-29	75.70%
	30-39	75.90%
ON	12-17	77.43%
	18-29	73.53%
	30-39	74.85%
QB	12-17	81.53%
	18-29	75.70%
	30-39	77.88%
NB	12-17	73.65%
	18-29	67.39%
	30-39	70.02%
	12-17	76.76%



<b>NS</b>	<b>18-29</b>	<b>69.46%</b>
	<b>30-39</b>	<b>74.08%</b>
<b>PEI</b>	<b>12-17</b>	<b>74.16%</b>
	<b>18-29</b>	<b>70.19%</b>
	<b>30-39</b>	<b>79.88%</b>
<b>NL</b>	<b>12-17</b>	<b>79.99%</b>
	<b>18-29</b>	<b>70.88%</b>
	<b>30-39</b>	<b>77.44%</b>
<b>YT</b>	<b>12-17</b>	<b>74.50%</b>
	<b>18-29</b>	<b>79.01%</b>
	<b>30-39</b>	<b>84.43%</b>
<b>NWT</b>	<b>12-17</b>	<b>67.12%</b>
	<b>18-29</b>	<b>61.84%</b>
	<b>30-39</b>	<b>73.55%</b>
<b>NU</b>	<b>12-17</b>	<b>58.21%</b>
	<b>18-29</b>	<b>67.83%</b>
	<b>30-39</b>	<b>73.79%</b>

## References

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### About CoVaRR-Net

Coronavirus Variants Rapid Response Network (CoVaRR-Net) is a network of interdisciplinary researchers from institutions across the country created to assist in the Government of Canada's overall strategy to address the potential threat of emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants. Pillar Six of CoVaRR-Net studies the impacts of Coronavirus variants on public health, our healthcare system, and on social policy, and reports these findings to decision-makers and government officials.

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