



**Westport Weston  
Health District**

October 20, 2020

Honorable Dr. Bindelglass  
First Selectman  
Town of Easton

Re: COVID-19 and Halloween

Dear First Selectman Bindelglass:

As of this writing Easton has had a total of 50 confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases and until recently, a relatively low local test positivity rate. The majority of cases range in age from about 20 to 63 years old. Statewide, there has been very little if any COVID-19 transmission in school settings; I am unaware of any transmission between students in the Easton School system. Most of the local transmission has been associated with college aged young people, and some associated with travel. Once a family member becomes positive, transmission within a household unit is very common.

The Governor has not banned or cancelled Halloween activities this year. This may be in part because the number of Connecticut COVID-19 cases in recent months has been fairly low when compared to other parts of the country. However, COVID-19 remains in all of our communities and the number of cases and the positivity rate has been increasing in November.

Recently, the State came out with a new Town Level COVID19 Response Framework that uses a 14-day rolling average of case rates which indicates Easton is in the "yellow zone" having a case rate of 5 to 9 cases per 100,000 of population. Here is a link to the Connecticut Department of Public Health's Town Level COVID Response Framework: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/Communications/Graphics/COVID-chart.jpg>

Being in the yellow, the state expects residents to start taking extra precautions due to higher risk, increase public awareness and social media information about the COVID19 risk, move activities outdoors whenever possible and re-enforce and enhance COVID19 prevention, safety and enforcement efforts.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that traditional Halloween activities do carry a higher risk for spreading COVID-19, but that risk can be reduced significantly by participating in fun, but lower or more moderate risk alternatives. They have developed safety recommendations and a list of lower risk alternative activities for Halloween that can be found on the CDC [guidance](#) document. Recommendations include:



- Limiting interactions with others,
- Avoiding trick-or-treating in groups,
- Staying in your home neighborhoods and practicing social distancing, hand hygiene and mask-wearing.
- Those who feel ill should not participate.

Higher risk activities that the CDC recommend people **not do** include:

- Participating in traditional trick-or-treating where treats are handed to children who go door to door
- Having trunk-or-treat where treats are handed out from trunks of cars lined up in large parking lots
- Attending crowded costume parties held indoors
- Going to an indoor haunted house where people may be crowded together and screaming
- Going on hayrides or tractor rides with people who are not in your household
- Traveling to a fall festival that is not in your community if you live in an area with community spread of COVID-19

The CDC also says costume masks are not a substitute for cloth masks, unless they are made of two or more layers of breathable fabric and cover the nose and mouth.

Different states, as well as communities within Connecticut, are taking different approaches on how to handle Halloween festivities. Some have “cancelled” all traditional Halloween activities, some are discouraging door to door candy collections and some are limiting trick or treating to a few hours window.

In conclusion, traditional Halloween activities are considered to be higher risk for transmitting COVID-19, and with Easton now being on the State’s radar for higher risk, citizens should be encouraged to scale back activities and/or at a minimum exercise extra precaution. An outright local Halloween ban is not likely to be successful could result in more risky behaviors rather than compliance to CDC recommendations. Local residents who don’t want to participate can either turn their outdoor lights off or put a sign on their door. Those who want to participate in the holiday’s activities should be encouraged to do so using the effective risk reduction mitigation strategies that include appropriate mask wearing, hand sanitizing, social distancing and staying away from large groups. A full list of CDC’s recommendations can be found in their [guidance](#) document. Even then, additional cases in the week that follows can be expected. A coordinated safety information effort the week before Halloween, including through the schools, could help reduce viral spread.



Mark A.R. Cooper, Director of Health  
Westport Weston Health District