At Halloween, children love to dress up and haunt their neighbourhoods trick-or-treating. For parents of children with food allergies this spooky celebration can be more tricky than treaty, but it doesn’t need to be that way.

For a fright free Halloween, be aware of these 7 watchouts:

1 Labelling considerations

Mini versions of sweet treats may contain different ingredients than their full-size counterparts. They may also not have ingredients on the individual treats as they may come in bigger bags. Make sure to double-check! Check every label, every time.

2 Common ingredients to watch out for

Many of the top 14 allergens are in high circulation during Halloween: milk, soya, wheat, eggs, peanuts, and tree nuts. They are used in most chocolates and even sweets. It’s important to be aware of any hidden allergens, with some sweets, lollipops and fruit chews containing nuts or sweets and are often manufactured with the same equipment as other sweet treats.

3 Cross-contamination risk with homemade treats

Watch out for homemade treats or confectionaries that are not wrapped. There could be cross-contamination risks with homemade treats such as cupcakes and brownies, with small amounts of an allergen inadvertently being transferred into the food. Have a conversation with your child to politely turn down treats that are loose/homemade.

4 May contain concerns

There is a large variation between products but generally treats such as chocolate and biscuits are at greater risk of cross-contamination with allergens. Some children with food allergies will need to avoid products that include may contain statements. Ask the household if they have the packaging to double-check if any may contain statements are included. When in doubt, swap it out…and trade it with a friend.

5 Costumes and Decorations

If your child also has a house dust mite allergy be sure to wash all costumes, decorations and toys to remove any house dust mites/dust they may have collected whilst in the loft/cupboard from last year. In addition, latex can feature in costumes too, especially the large hood type masks. If the costume is imported, it may not have clear labelling. Those with skin allergies may react to the metallics and ingredients such as milk, which can be found in face paints, false nail, and eyelash adhesives.

Smoke machines can also present issues for anyone with asthma and pumpkin carving can also trigger an allergic response on the skin due to birch pollens.

6 Treats from abroad

With the summer holidays finally over, people may have brought back some treats from abroad to hand out this Halloween. While this can be a nice opportunity to try new items, it can be a potential risk for children with allergies. The labels will be in a different language, therefore harder to tell which allergens are in each treat and even those in the same language present a risk if they’re from the USA, where they have different allergen labelling requirements to those in the UK. Even a product with the same name globally such as Coca Cola, may have different local recipes and ingredients that vary to the version which is typically sold in the UK.

7 Celebrating Halloween at school

Halloween falls in term time this year. Check with your child’s school in advance to see if they are planning any Halloween activities and check to see if they are safe for your child.