

# All Set for Halloween? 5 Ways to Pet-Proof Your Home

You and your family may love Halloween, but there's a good chance your pet loathes it. Keeping your pet's safety in mind, here are ways you can enjoy the spooky evening ahead without risking your dog's or cat's well-being.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Halloween is a holiday that pet guardians may love, but pets may loathe
- Keep Halloween candy, including chocolates, gum, raisins and sugar-free treats, out of pet's reach at all times
- Be sure decorations like candles, glow sticks and fake spiderwebs are not accessible to pets
- Never force your pet to wear a costume and, if you do put your pet in one, be sure it's comfortable and lightweight, without dangling strings, buttons or other choking hazards
- If your pet becomes anxious by frequent doorbell rings or strange visitors, keep your pet in a cozy safe room away from the hustle-and-bustle

While you and your family may be looking forward to scary movies, jack-o'-lanterns and trick-or-treating, your pets may be getting ready to hide out — away from all the doorbell ringing and scratchy pet costumes.

In all seriousness, like the Fourth of July, Halloween is a holiday that pet guardians may love, but pets may loathe. To ensure a good — and safe — time is had by all, it's important to look out for your pet's well-being at all times.

## 5 Tips to Keep Your Pet Safe on Halloween

1. **Keep halloween candy out of your pet's reach** — Halloween candy isn't for pets, but they don't know that. If they can get into your trick-or-treat bag or candy dish, they probably will, so make sure it's safely out of their reach at all times. Chocolate candy is, of course, off limits, as it contains a caffeine-like stimulant that can cause vomiting, diarrhea, hyperactivity, racing pulse and even seizures in pets.

However, even non-chocolate candies aren't OK, as most contain lots of sugar and/or fat, which can cause gastrointestinal upset and pancreatitis in pets. Also watch out for trail mix, chocolate-covered or yogurt-covered raisins, as **grapes are toxic** to pets. Sugar-free candies and gum are also dangerous, as they may contain xylitol.

Consuming **xylitol** can lead to a sudden release of insulin, followed by a sharp drop in blood sugar (hypoglycemia), triggering vomiting, loss of consciousness and seizures. Larger doses can also cause liver failure and death, which may begin hours or days after ingestion.<sup>1,2</sup> Be aware that xylitol may also be referred to as "birch sugar," "birch sap" or "wood sugar."

Even empty candy wrappers are dangerous to pets, so make sure children know to toss them into a covered trash bin immediately. The problem is they smell like candy, which can entice your pet to eat them. Ingesting

foil and cellophane wrappers can cause a life-threatening bowel obstruction, so keep all candy wrappers out of the reach of pets.

2. **Pet-proof your spooky décor** — Eerie candles, glow sticks and light-up skeletons are fun ways to add to your Halloween ambiance, but each poses risks to pets. A knocked-over candle can start a fire, while left unattended could burn your pet. Glow sticks contain liquid that may be harmful to your pet if chewed and swallowed, while the tiny button batteries found in many light-up decorations can be deadly if consumed.

Fake spiderwebs are another hazard. Outdoors they can be deadly to birds while indoors they may prove to be irresistible to cats. But once ingested, the stringy material may **lead to choking** or become tangled in their intestines, requiring surgical removal.

3. **Save costumes for the humans** — There may be an occasional pup who simply loves to dress up. But in most cases, pets prefer to spend Halloween in their birthday suits, sans costume. If you do decide to dress up your pet, and he's agreeable to it, be sure the costume you choose is:
  - Lightweight so she doesn't overheat
  - Comfortable and stretchy so it doesn't restrict her movement
  - Free of strings, buttons or other adornments that your pet could swallow or get tangled in

Do not use a costume that covers your pet's nose or face, and never force your pet to wear a costume if she seems stressed by it.

4. **Be sure your pet has identification** — With your door opening and closing all night for trick-or-treaters, be sure your pet is wearing identification in the event she gets out. Even better, if there's even a slight chance your pet may bolt out the door, keep her in a safe space, such as a crate or gated room, so she doesn't get lost.
5. **Create a safe room for your pet** — If your pet becomes anxious by frequent doorbell rings or strange visitors, keep your pet in a room away from the hustle-and-bustle, where she's not directly exposed to the loud noises from outside. Create a safe haven with bedding, a toy or two, and a few treats. You can also turn on a TV or music to help muffle the noise from outside.

Classical music, in particular, may help calm your dog's nerves. A plug-in diffuser that releases natural species-specific pheromones can also be calming for pets on Halloween.

## A Safe Halloween Treat for Your Pet

Unsalted **pumpkin seeds** or a dollop of plain, organic 100% pure canned pumpkin are other seasonal treats your pet may enjoy.

## Pumpkin Almond Cookies for Pets

### Ingredients:

- 🐾 1/4 cup coconut flour
- 🐾 1 pastured egg
- 🐾 1/2 cup pumpkin

- 🐾 1 tablespoon almond butter
- 🐾 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- 🐾 A dash of cinnamon, ginger or clove (optional)

### **Procedure:**

1. Add all the ingredients to a bowl and mix well.
2. Place the cookies on a greased cookie sheet and bake at 325 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 minutes.
3. Let the cookies cool before serving to your pets.

Happy Halloween!

### **Sources and References**

<sup>1</sup> [Pet Poison Helpline, Xylitol Pet Poisoning Cases More Than Doubled Over Five Years](#)

<sup>2</sup> [ASPCA May 23, 2019](#)

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