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# Focus on

# Pumpkin Carving Safety

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Every Halloween season patients are injured while carving pumpkins. The resulting injuries to the hand and fingers can be severe and may require three or four months of rehabilitation to restore function.

We hope the following tips will encourage caution and prevent hand and finger injuries when carving.



## CARVE IN A CLEAN, DRY, WELL-LIT AREA

Wash and thoroughly dry all of the tools that you will use to carve the pumpkin: carving tools, knife, cutting surface, and your hands. Any moisture on your hands, tools, or table can cause slipping that can lead to injuries.

## ALWAYS HAVE ADULT SUPERVISION

Adolescent patients are at risk for injury. Parents often think that the kids are responsible enough to be left on their own. Even though the carving may be going great, it only takes a second for an injury to occur.

## LEAVE THE CARVING TO ADULTS

Never let children do the carving. We suggest letting kids draw a pattern on the pumpkin and have them be responsible for cleaning out the inside pulp and seeds. When the adults do start cutting, they should always cut away from themselves and cut in small, controlled strokes.

## SHARPER IS NOT BETTER

A sharper knife is not necessarily better because it often becomes wedged in the thicker part of the pumpkin, requiring force to remove it. An injury can occur if your hand is in the wrong place as the knife finally dislodges from the thick skin of the pumpkin. Injuries are also sustained when the knife slips and comes out the other side of the pumpkin where your hand may be holding it steady.

## USE A PUMPKIN CARVING KIT

Special pumpkin carving kits are available in stores and include small serrated pumpkin saws that work better because they are less likely to get stuck in the thick pumpkin tissue. If they do get jammed and then wedged free, they are not sharp enough to cause a deep, penetrating cut.



## HELP FOR A PUMPKIN CARVING INJURY

Should you cut your finger or hand, bleeding from minor cuts will often stop on its own by applying direct pressure to the wound with a clean cloth. If continuous pressure does not slow or stop after 15 minutes, an urgent care/emergency room visit may be required. © American Society for Surgery of the Hand.

## HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

