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FACE PAINTING YOUR LITTLE GOBLIN FOR HALLOWEEN

Boo! Did I scare you? Well I think it's scary that it's almost that time of year when all our little ghosts, goblins and princesses will be roaming the streets. As parents of young children we may be making choices for our kids about Halloween and trick-or-treating. One thing that remains constant from year to year is the wonderment and joy of dressing up in costume! A growing trend nationwide along with homemade costumes is the use of face paint to complete a costume. In fact some costumes can't be done any other way. So what kind do you use? With all the recalls dealing with paint and increased cases of allergies, which paint is really safe to use?

Unfortunately the answer isn't completely black and white. We humans have a varying level of sensitivity to cosmetics and chemicals; we see this in the mom who can't wear certain moisturizers, children who can't use bubble bath and entire offices that ban fragrances because of severe allergies.

Craft Paint

Too often well intentioned volunteers will face paint at local holiday carnivals or fairs with craft paint they have in the supply closet, duly noting that it is 'non-toxic'. However, there seems to be a misunderstanding of the term "non-toxic." Non-toxic only means that something will not kill you if you ingest it. (At least not right away.) This does not mean it is approved for use on the face or body. Think of it this way a jalapeno is non-toxic but you wouldn't want to rub it on your face. Likewise a craft or acrylic paint may contain toxic chemicals such as polymers and potential carcinogens. When reactions occur they most often include painful raised blisters and itchy rashes, on rare occasions the use of craft paint can scar some skin types and cause serious anaphylactic allergies resulting in inflammation of the airways.

Tempra Paint

Another dubious material sometimes recommended is tempra paint mixed with face lotion. And even though our children may have painted themselves once or twice at home without adverse reactions, tempra isn't FDA approved for use on the face. Of course our concerns are justifiably heightened when we're dealing with children who are more sensitive to toxins than adults.

Food Coloring

Other 'recipes' available on the internet include a variety using food coloring. Web sites promote using food coloring mixed with glycerin, flour, corn syrup or cold cream. And while most of these ingredients are 'food safe' there is no escaping the fact that you are applying food coloring to your child's face -- and possibly clothes, bedding and furniture. Any mother who's made a birthday cake or two can attest to the staining power of food coloring!

While food coloring is perhaps the least toxic of this short list of coloring agents, if you suspect a rash has been caused by a substance you painted on your child, immediately wash the area with cool water and gentle soap. Be careful -- occasionally harsh detergent soaps or even baby wipes can exacerbate the problem. Then try an over-the-counter Benadryl lotion. If the problem persists, consult your doctor right away. If any reaction to a product occurs it will probably happen within the first fifteen minutes. This goes for hypersensitive children who react to industry standard cosmetic-grade make up, as well as kids who have been painted with craft paint.

As a mom and a body artist I would never paint my child, or any child, with anything less than top quality professional paints you can buy from reputable online merchants or at select costume shops. A quality list of professional water based face suppliers include: Snazaroo, Wolfe Bros., Graftobian, Fantasy World Wide, Paradise, Kryolan, Ben Nye and Fardel. Snazaroo is so confident of their product they stand behind it with a two million dollar product liability policy and an entire web site of useful FDA information. So pick a costume, design a face to go with it, then give your child that special extra touch that makes him or her stand out from the rest of the trick-or-treating crowd and be confident that you know what you're putting on your angel is attractive AND safe!

Karen Baker; owner of FairyDust Faces; Face Painting and Body Art will be hosting a 'hands-on workshop' designed for parents who want to learn professional face painting tips and work on their child's specific Halloween design. Call for details 707-981-4603