

Halloween is fast approaching, and if you don't have a costume yet, now is the time to get thinking about it. Now I know what you're saying. "Last year at an inflation party, I got so big my costume was torn to shreds!" Or maybe "I ate all my candy in one sitting and split my costume right in half!" So I get it, why spend time or money on a costume this year if it's just going to get destroyed again? Well never fear. An expandable middle is no reason to not get into the holiday spirit! I've dealt with bloating out of costumes my whole life, but I've come up with some great tricks and tips that you can use to make sure your costume will survive the night.

The first thing you're going to want to do is invite a friend over to help you measure your waistline at your maximum comfortable size. Most of you will already have the materials you need for this, but if not, you're going to need:

- 1-2 cylinders of compressed air
- 1 long rubber hose
- 1 exceptionally large tape measure

The cylinders and hose can be found at any standard party supply store, like Fiesta City. A large enough tape measure can be hard to find, but I got mine at JoAnnie's Fabrics, which is a common crafts store chain.

For those of you who find most of their growth is in their gut, there is an easy and elegant solution to your problem. All you need is some extra fabric, basic sewing skills, and velcro! What I like to do is sew a few extra feet of fabric into the back of my costume, whatever it may be. Then, you tuck and fold the fabric over itself until the costume fits you properly again. Find the crease where the extra material is tucked away, and sew the velcro patches onto either side of the fold. Then just stick it together. If you find yourself getting too big for what the costume would normally allow, the forgiving velcro will pull apart, and the extra fabric it was hiding will give you a lot more room to grow without ruining your outfit.

Now I know some of you out there find that when you fill, it doesn't say in the stomach. Your arms start to bloat, your legs and neck get puffy. It wouldn't be practical to sew extra fabric and velcro patches into every piece of cloth you're wearing. Some friends of mine have suggested building your costume using stretchy fabrics, and making sure that it hangs a little loose overall. How stretchy and how loose is going to depend largely on how large you can get, and how close to a perfect sphere shape you end up. Make sure to experiment with plain shirts and pants made from your chosen material before adding in all the extra costume details. This method can take some trial and error.

Once you have your basic outfit done, you're going to want to be mindful of the details. Things like bracelets, anklets, chains, necklaces, and especially belts. While these accessories are often necessary to complete a costume, they don't tend to be forgiving when you start expand. If you're not burdened with too many accessories, the easiest thing to do is to just be mindful of them, and take them off if you start to swell. If you're covered from head to toe though, you might want to consider modifying them so that they have a safe break-off point that can come apart under pressure, but easily be repaired later.

If these options just sound like too much work, then there are some simple costume ideas that inherently support inflation, so you won't have to try and hide that your outfit can get big. If you're the video game playing kind, you can get inflation-friendly costumes of Fygar and

Pooka from Dig Dug at most Halloween costume outlets. You could purchase “clever joke” costumes at specialty Halloween stores, which offer options such as party balloon, blimp or colorful beach ball. For a creative inflatable costume idea that will frighten the Halloween spirit into your other inflatable friends, you can dress as a pointy, puffy, puffer fish. And if you fancy a more complex inflatable costume, you can model yourself after the bloat-inclined Honeypot ant.

Now don't worry. Unless you've got a lot of experience with costume-making, there's a chance that you'll still burst out of your outfit this year. That's okay! This is a learning process, and you'll make some mistakes. I sure did. But eventually you'll get the hang of it, and you'll have a costume that is both the talk of the town, and can get as big as it too.