



Summer Festival and Fair Well-Being Tips

With sunny days, seasonal breaks and time off, summer is a popular time for public outdoor events like festivals and fairs. Although they are fun, these events present unseen risks to your well-being.

This article provides an overview of summer festivals and fairs, discusses the hazards and risks at these events, and offers tips to stay healthy and safe.

Overview of Summer Festivals and Fairs

Festivals and fairs are celebrations of music, culture, food and community. Many are family-friendly, but millennials and Generation Z generally make up the majority of attendees. Common types of festivals and fairs include:

- State fairs
- County fairs
- Music festivals
- Renaissance fairs
- Cultural festivals

More popular events, such as major music festivals, can have over 100,000 attendees, and some state fairs can attract over 1 million visitors. In addition to these major events, most cities have local fairs or smaller festivals. In general, the popularity of these events, coupled with warm summer weather, can introduce health and safety concerns.

Health and Safety Risks

The following are risks you may encounter at festivals and fairs:

- **Heat-related illness**—The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that more than 700 people die from extreme heat every year in the United States. The outdoor settings of festivals and fairs can lead to several heat-related illnesses, including heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heatstroke, which require medical attention.
- **Sun exposure**—In addition to the heat, the sun's ultraviolet rays can damage unprotected skin in as little as 15 minutes, according to the CDC. While sunburn can be painful in the short term, sun damage can cause long-term health concerns.
- **Crowd safety hazards**—Large crowds at festivals and fairs increase the risk of injuries. During an emergency, it may be difficult to navigate through a dense crowd. Additionally, in panic situations, trampling, falls and crushing can occur.
- **Dehydration**—It's easy to become dehydrated when you're at an outdoor event for hours in the hot sun. This affects you not only physically but also mentally, potentially leading to confusion, agitation or anxiety. Symptoms of dehydration include headache, light-headedness, tiredness, thirstiness and dark-colored urine.
- **Food and drink safety risks**—It's important to eat nutritiously to help avoid energy crashes at festivals and fairs. However, the abundance of food and drink vendors may increase the risk of food poisoning or other foodborne illnesses if items are not handled or stored properly.
- **Personal safety concerns**—Due to the high activity levels and large crowds, festivals and fairs can be hot spots for theft and other unwanted behavior.
- **Hearing damage**—Prolonged exposure to high volumes, especially at events featuring

music, may cause temporary or permanent hearing loss.

Well-being Tips for Summer Festivals and Fairs

Festivals and fairs are a great way to spend time with friends and family. Event organizers and health experts stress the importance of health and safety measures to ensure everyone can have fun and stay safe. Consider the following ways to maintain your well-being:

- **Plan ahead.** Having a plan for potential emergencies and other needs can ensure your day of fun goes smoothly while minimizing safety hazards. Check the weather report to determine the best time to go and how to dress for the day. Familiarize yourself with the venue layout so you can easily locate exits, first-aid stations and water refill points. Sticking with your group of friends or family can further enhance safety. If you split up or get separated, have a plan for when and where to meet back up.
- **Check event policies.** Festivals and fairs generally post informational flyers or have policies on their websites detailing what is allowed and prohibited at the event. For example, these policies may cover what types of bags you can bring, if you can bring a water bottle or hydration backpack, what kinds of sunscreen containers are allowed or if you can bring an umbrella. Policies often include a list of prohibited items that should be left at home due to safety concerns. This information can help you prepare for an eventful day while maintaining your well-being.
- **Stay cool and hydrate.** To reduce the risk of heat-related illness as well as dehydration, wear light, breathable clothing and drink plenty of water throughout the day. Take frequent breaks from activity and sun exposure in the shade to rest and cool down, especially during periods of intense sun or activity. Check the venue's policy on bringing your own water bottle so you can drink and refill conveniently. Electrolyte drinks may help you stay hydrated, especially if it is hot outside. However, health experts warn against overrelying on these drinks rather than focusing on drinking enough water.
- **Use sun protection.** Wearing a hat and sunscreen can help protect against sun damage. Health experts recommend using sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 and reapplying every two hours. Additionally, sunglasses can protect your eyes from the sun.
- **Protect your hearing.** At loud events, you can use earplugs or noise-canceling headphones to reduce hearing damage. You can also consider taking breaks from noisy areas.
- **Prioritize your personal safety.** To help prevent theft, secure your belongings in anti-theft bags and keep valuables close to you. Always be aware of your surroundings to avoid potential hazards, navigate crowds, and keep yourself and your belongings safe. Avoiding dense crowds can also reduce the chance of theft or getting injured. Consider packing a first-aid kit in case of minor injuries.
- **Eat and drink responsibly.** Assess the food and drink vendors you choose. Evaluate whether they are clean (e.g., they should have an adequate inspection report, and workstations should be clean and tidy) and if they have appropriate food safety equipment (e.g., refrigerators, gloves, tongs). Alternatively, you can eat before arriving at the event or pack your own food if the venue permits it. Additionally, if consuming alcohol or caffeine, make sure to do so safely and balance these drinks with water; too much of either can exacerbate dehydration and heat illness.

Summary

Prioritizing your health and safety at festivals and fairs can help you minimize risks and maximize fun this summer. Contact your employer for more well-being resources.