

STAY SAFE DURING MUSIC FESTIVAL SEASON

Protect your eardrums from damage, and don't stand too close to loud speakers.

➔ Spring marks the return of outdoor music festival season, and for the millions of people who attend each year, it's not a moment too soon. In Las Vegas, the Electric Daisy Carnival is one of the most-attended festivals on the circuit. However, there are many other festivals nearby. While these events are a perfect opportunity to catch your favorite bands, spend time with friends and enjoy the outdoors, there are many potential health risks of which to be aware. To get the most from your weekend of merrymaking, follow these tips for a happy and healthy festival experience.

BEAT THE HEAT

"Heat-related illnesses, including heat exhaustion and heat stroke, can take down even the hardest concert-goer under the right circumstances," said Dr. Jeffrey Murawsky, MD, FACP, chief medical officer at Sunrise Hospital & Medical Center. Hot days and physical exertion — such as dancing — can contribute to heat-related illnesses. Alcohol consumption and dehydration can exacerbate the potential for a problem. To help protect yourself from the sun, do the following:

- Drink lots of water, and don't overindulge with alcohol.
- Apply and reapply sunscreen every three to six hours.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and a hat with a brim.
- Take frequent breaks in the shade, and don't overexert yourself physically.

Eat healthy, balanced snacks, and don't skip meals, especially breakfast.



STAY HYDRATED, DON'T OVERINDULGE

Staying hydrated is essential at a music festival. "You should sip water every 15 to 20 minutes. When the heat index is 103 degrees to 115 degrees, drink about 4 cups of water every hour," Murawsky said. He also recommends drinking plenty of water before you leave home and packing fruits and vegetables with a high water content to snack on. Good snacks include watermelon, grapes, berries, cucumbers, celery, melon and grapefruit. If you're drinking alcohol, maintaining a good water-to-alcohol ratio also is key. "Drink twice as much water as alcohol, and choose beverages or mixed drinks that include some water as well," Murawsky said. Limiting your alcohol consumption to one drink every hour and drinking two glasses of water per one alcoholic beverage can help keep you hydrated and reduce the likelihood of alcohol poisoning. Familiarize yourself with the symptoms of alcohol poisoning, and call 911 or alert festival security immediately if you think someone you know has alcohol poisoning. Symptoms include:

- Confusion
- Loss of coordination
- Vomiting
- Seizure
- Irregular or slow breathing (less than eight breaths per minute)
- Blue-tinged or pale skin
- Low body temperature
- Cold sweats
- Stupor (when someone is conscious but unresponsive)
- Unconsciousness

FIGHT OFF GERMS

The risk of contracting an illness is elevated during a music festival. "Close quarters make concerts a hotbed of various viruses and bacterial infections," Murawsky said. "Lots of people using too few and underserviced public restrooms cause petri-dish level breeding grounds for the flu, norovirus, salmonella and even Hepatitis A." Limit your exposure by washing your hands and using napkins or paper towels to turn on sinks and open doors. Pack hand sanitizer to use as often as you need. Loading up on vitamin C in the weeks leading up to the festival also can help strengthen your immune system.

ILLICIT DRUGS AND OVERDOSES ARE THE CAUSE OF MANY EMERGENCIES

Every year, people die or are severely hurt because of drug use or heavy drinking at music festivals. "Fill a concert venue with thousands of enthusiastic music lovers, and add alcohol or drugs to a hot day, and you have a target-rich environment for bizarre accidents," Murawsky said. "Falls, suffocation, physical violence, tripping hazards and fire hazards are all real threats to personal safety." It's important to remain aware of your surroundings and keep an eye out for potentially dangerous or escalating situations.

Drug overdoses and drug-related deaths are another avoidable tragedy. "Some concerts have harm-reduction programs such as free drug testing to help people make smarter decisions, but the truth is, taking any drug or unknown substance is a good way to end up leaving the concert in an ambulance," Murawsky said.



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