

## How To Survive a Music Festival

By: Sammy Caiola



Social media posts from music festivals make the popular summer events seem like mystical utopias, populated by flower-crowned women dancing in the sun, dazed listeners sprawling on blankets and pumped-up millennials bopping endlessly to the beat.

What they don't show are some of the physical consequences of these adrenaline-charged, germ-infested gatherings. Injuries include alcohol- and dehydration-induced headaches, searing sunburns and other gnarly ailments resulting from hours of sweaty, crowded revelry.

Media reports in recent years have tallied injuries and deaths from festivals such as Burning Man, Electric Daisy Carnival and Coachella. The causes vary, but most of the tragedies can be traced largely to dehydration, substance abuse, fights or trampling by crowds.

With summer concert season in full swing, now is the time to educate about music festival safety, said Dr. Jeff Grange, associate professor of emergency medicine at Loma Linda University. Grange is at the forefront of an evolving medical sub-specialty called "event medicine," focused on providing fast, quality medical care at crowded events. He's been doctoring attendees of rock concerts, auto races and marathons since the early 1990s.

“At the big gatherings, whether it’s a Burning Man or a NASCAR race, (the venue) turns into a city,” he said. “Anything that happens in a city, you’ll see. Anything from delivering babies to stubbed toes to an asthma attack. It can happen, and it does.”

In a study of first-aid stations at approximately 400 concerts at five major California concert venues, Grange found that the median patient load per concert was 2.1 patients per 10,000 attendees – the highest being 71 at a punk rock festival that turned into a riot. He also found that first-aid stations at rock concerts had more than two times the patient load when compared with stations at non-rock events.

“The ones where folks go into the Hollywood Bowl, an amphitheater, those numbers tend to be lower vs. a music fest where they may be out for 12 hours dancing, exerting themselves,” he said. “You certainly see a cumulative effect. You’ve got young kids out there dancing for hours, not hydrating enough with the right fluids. They’re frequently drinking energy drinks or alcohol, which exacerbates the problem.”

Doctors at music festivals work hard to handle problems in-house so as to not put a strain on the local emergency medical system, Grange said. “The goal is generally to have the same level or better as you would have in the general community.”

Want to help the medical staff out at the next festival you attend? Grange has two pieces of advice: Lay off the drugs and alcohol, and stay hydrated.

“Just take care of yourself, and you’ll be fine,” he said. “The 99 plus percent are out there having a great time. ... But if you do drugs or drink and don’t take care of yourself, you’re going to have problems.”

Here are a few tips from concertgoers on healthful goodies to fill your festival fanny pack:

### **Hydration**

Gabrielle Francis, author of “The Rockstar Remedy,” recommends easy-to-pack Nuun tablets for an electrolyte boost.

### **Immune health and hygiene**

Francis recommends Emergen-C drink packets for extra vitamins.

### **Ear health**

Francis suggests standing in the center of the crowd so sound is equal to both ears.