

Health hazards linked to festivals: an overview

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A festival or gala is an event that is ordinarily staged by a local community that centers around and celebrates a unique aspect of that community. Among many religions, a feast is a set of celebrations in honor of God.¹

Each population and community has specific rejoicings and feasts. The joy and jubilation in these solemnities alleviate psychology

stress and, hence, one's health. Nevertheless, there are health hazards and risks that are associated with these festivals.

The practices in such festivals vary, as do the patterns of health problems among them. Yet, they share many features. For example, in all festivals, people enjoy traveling to see their relatives and loved ones. Thus, they are a common time for travel-related health problems.

In Table 1, I have highlighted examples of health hazards that might be encountered during festivities (Figures 1-3), and in Table 2, I list some strategies to address and decrease these risks.

I have also selected bibliographies²⁻¹² to satisfy those readers who wish to know more about this topic.

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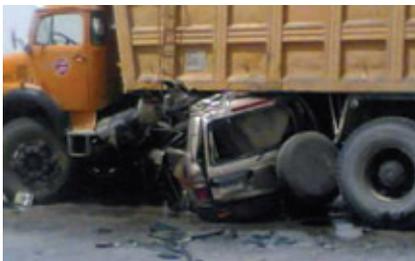


Figure 1. Road traffic accidents are very common during holidays, when people commonly move from one place to another.



Figure 2. Fireworks may result in mortality and serious catastrophes, such as burns and eye injuries. They should be kept out of the reach of children.



Figure 3. Different types Censers that contain hot embers to burn specific woods to produce fragrant smokes. They are used by certain ethnic populations to welcome their guests to the festivals. However, this practice may exacerbate conditions in asthmatic patients and cause burns from accidental touching by children.

Table 1. Examples of health hazards that might be seen during festivals.

1. Travel-related risks, most notably, RTAs (Figure 1), venous thrombosis, sunburn, and exposure to microbial diseases, such as by visiting malaria endemic areas
2. Risk of non-compliance with treatments due to missing medications, for example. This might effect uncontrolled chronic diseases, such as hypertension and heart disease
3. Risks of overeating, which is common during holidays, which can result in poor control of blood sugar in diabetic patients
3. Risks of using fireworks (Figure 2)
4. Risks of developing contact dermatitis from cosmetics use by women
5. Risks related to specific practices for each particular event. For instance, the risk of getting or from slaughtering animals in Islamic Hajj festivals or risk associated with incense smoke (Figure 3), done commonly by Arabs during their festival of breaking the fasting of the month of *Ramadan*

RTAs, road traffic accidents.

Table 2. Examples of strategies to address and decrease health hazards that might be seen during festivals.

1. Health care providers need to be aware of the health hazards that are prone to occur in festivals to be able to manage them effectively. They also need to be aware of the types of festivals, habits, and traditions done of the majority or minorities residing in their area so that they expect the potential health problems and are ready to deal with them
2. Health authorities should initiate a targeted health education program and campaign to alert the people about expected hazards, before each occasion, with particular advice and instructions on how to avoid them
3. Travel clinics might be held to provide the necessary instructions and vaccinations for people who wish to spend their holidays outside their areas
4. Hospitals should be properly staffed and equipped before each festival and be vigilant for the risk of mass accidents

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