

Walking Off the Munchies

Almost every South Carolina town or community has an annual fair, festival or carnival. These events feature many high-calorie treats like funnel cakes, cotton candy, caramel apples and corn dogs. Since you do a lot of walking at these events, you may think you can burn off those extra food calories. You can, if you walk up to a mile and a half for a bag of cotton candy or three miles for a funnel cake!

Most of the foods we traditionally associate with fairs, festivals and carnivals are characterized by big portions with lots of sugar and fat calories. For many people, attending the event wouldn't be nearly as much fun without these tasty treats. You look forward to a corn dog or cotton candy, and some of these treats are once-a-year foods.

So, how much exercise does it take to walk off your favorite munchies? On average, you have to walk about one mile to burn 100 calories. To visualize how far that is, there are approximately 12 city blocks to the mile. Although calories in your favorite festival food can vary depending on portion size, recipe and more, you would have to take an 18-block walk to burn off the calories in a serving of cotton candy.

Here are the approximate distances you have to walk to burn off the calories from a few popular foods available at festivals, fairs and carnivals:

- Corn dog, large: 4.5 miles
- Fried candy bar on a stick: 4.5 miles
- Funnel cake, 6-inch diameter: 3 miles
- Soft pretzel: 3 miles
- Caramel apple: 3 miles
- Soft drink, 32 ounce: 2.5 miles
- Sno-cone: 2.5 miles
- Cotton candy: 1.5 miles

This does not mean that you need to load a picnic basket with carrot sticks and celery before heading to the fair. With a little planning, you can fit your favorite fair foods into your daily diet. Here's how:

- Quench your thirst with a small soft drink instead of the larger sizes. Better yet, buy or bring along bottled water. Save your calories for your favorite once-a-year food.
- Limit yourself to one treat. Make sure the rest of your choices are reasonable serving sizes of lower-sugar and lower-fat items.
- Check out all the food booths before making your selection. Imagine that you have a "calorie salary." Enjoy the foods you like the most for your "salary."
- Split foods among several people. For example, share a large funnel cake with friends. Everyone gets a taste, and no one gets overloaded.
- Allow enough time to sit down and eat, rather than grazing your way from one end of the fairgrounds to the other. It's hard to know how much you're eating when you're walking, talking and eating at the same time.
- Dress in comfortable shoes so you're more likely to walk off some of those extra calories. Wear a pedometer and see how many steps you can take at the festival. One mile equals about 2,000 steps, or around one-third of the calories in a caramel apple.
- Finally, if you do indulge a little too much, remember to return to a more balanced way of eating the next day. A day or two of overeating won't affect your weight that much, but weeks of overeating will. Eating an extra 100 calories daily can result in a 10-pound weight gain in a year.

To learn more about physical activity, refer to the following:

- [HGIC 4030, *Physical Activity Pyramid*](#)
- [HGIC 4031, *Physical Activity for Adults*](#)
- [HGIC 4032, *Physical Activity for Children*](#)
- Healthy South Carolina Challenge at <http://www.healthysc.gov/>

Source:

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