



UK Health
Security
Agency

Festivals toolkit 2026

Communications pack for UKHSA stakeholders



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Introduction

This briefing pack provides information on staying well during the 2026 festival season. It aims to support stakeholders to explain and promote key health messages for festival goers, including guidance on vaccinations, STIs, hot weather and general hygiene. It contains background information, statistics, key messages, suggested social media copy, social media assets and links to useful information.

For further information about our national campaign and communications please contact: externalaffairs@ukhsa.gov.uk

Sign up to [our Stakeholder Cascade](#) to receive a weekly newsletter with the latest news, updates and guidance from UKHSA

Follow UKHSA on X (Twitter): [@UKHSA](#) and BlueSky: [@ukhsa.bsky.social](#).

Festival safety

Festivals take place all over the UK during the summer months and attract thousands of visitors from across the country and overseas. Festivals can be great fun but we encourage those attending festivals to stay well and be aware of possible risks to their health including infectious diseases such as measles, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and heat-related illness such as sun burn. Visitors should be reminded to be aware of ongoing health risks so they can enjoy attending festivals and other events safely and responsibly this summer.

How stakeholders can help us promote festival safety

There are a variety of ways that you might be able to help us communicate the importance of festival safety this summer.

- **Share the advice and information in this toolkit with your networks**
- **Contact us if you would like to do something more bespoke** – if you are looking to do something special to promote festival safety on your social media channels or website and need an expert quote or suggested text for a blog/article, please email us.
- **Get in touch about using our spokespeople** – if you are planning a webinar or briefing for your audiences and would like one of our senior medical colleagues to speak about festival safety, please get in touch.

To discuss any of the above or any other suggestions you may have, please email externalaffairs@ukhsa.gov.uk

What are the risks to health at festivals?

With lots of people coming together and mixing closely, festivals can present the perfect opportunity for infections to spread as well as an increased risk of other health risks, including exposure to extremes of weather and excess alcohol and drugs.

We have created this toolkit which is full of useful information and resources to get across three main messages for festival-goers:

1. Help to protect your health before going to a festival

It is really important that people attending festivals this summer are up to date with their vaccines, and that they take precautions to keep themselves safe and healthy.

2. Be informed

Festival-goers should be aware of health risks including those associated with drug and alcohol use, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), diseases such as measles and meningococcal disease, and heat-related illness.

3. Get medical advice quickly

Festival-goers should make sure someone knows if they feel ill and check on friends who are unwell. They should get medical help or advice immediately if they are worried about their own or someone else's health.

General advice

Most health risks can be avoided by taking simple steps to help protect yourself and others. Regular good hygiene can help prevent the spread of most germs and infections and remembering to keep yourself cool and avoid excess alcohol can help keep you well during periods of hot weather.

Those attending festivals can take some basic steps to protect themselves and others.

Before you go:

- Make sure you have your vaccines if eligible
- Check the health and safety advice on the festival website before you travel and encourage your friends to do the same
- Avoid travelling if you are feeling very unwell
- Pack suncream (a high SPF is best!)
- Pack hand sanitiser
- Consider getting a free STI test
- Bring condoms or other protection if you are planning on having sex

While on site:

- Stay hydrated and avoid drinking excessive alcohol, particularly in hot weather
- Wash your hands regularly – especially after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food. Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are unavailable, use a hand sanitiser.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Never take a BBQ into a tent - despite being out in the fresh air, carbon monoxide can build up to levels that can kill very quickly in enclosed spaces
- If you are preparing food – wash fruit and vegetables well and cook meat thoroughly to avoid food poisoning
- Stay safe in the sun by using sunscreen, wearing a hat and seeking shade in the hottest parts of the day
- Wear protection if having sex. Condoms are one of the best ways to enjoy safer sex as they're the only form of contraception that also protects against STIs.
- Seek advice from an onsite medical facility if you become unwell

Diarrhoea and vomiting

Diarrhoea and vomiting are often caused by a stomach bug and should stop in a few days. To try and avoid these while onsite, don't eat undercooked food, wash your hands regularly and thoroughly. If you become ill with diarrhoea and vomiting at a festival, follow the advice below to help avoid spreading an infection.

- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently
- Wash any clothing or bedding that has poo or vomit on it separately on a hot wash when you return home
- Do not prepare food for other people
- Do not share towels, flannels, cutlery, bottles or utensils
- Do not use a swimming pool until at least 48 hours after your symptoms stop

For more information, visit the [NHS website](#).

Measles

Measles is circulating across the country, and festivals can be the perfect place for measles to spread if people are unvaccinated. Symptoms of measles include a high fever, sore red watery eyes and a blotchy red brown rash.

Measles spreads easily between people in close contact. Those attending festivals this summer should ensure that they and their children are up to date with their MMR or MMRV vaccinations. Make sure to book your appointment to get vaccinated with your GP well ahead of travelling to a festival to make sure there is time for immunity to develop. With new clusters and outbreaks currently being identified, it's important to protect yourself and your family.

The MMR vaccine protects against measles, mumps and rubella and is recommended for anyone born on or before 31 December 2019 who missed having this vaccine when they were younger. Children born after 1 January 2020 are now offered the MMRV vaccine, which protects against measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox (varicella). These infections spread easily between people and can lead to serious problems including meningitis, blindness and hearing loss. Measles can lead to complications that require a stay in hospital and on rare occasions can cause lifelong disability or death.

We know that some young people missed out on their MMR when they were younger – MMR uptake was as low as 80% in 2003. This means that many young people remain unprotected, and we have seen measles and mumps cases and outbreaks linked to these age groups.

The MMRV vaccine is recommended for all babies and young children, but older children and adults can have the MMR if they were not vaccinated when they were younger. If you have the vaccine when you're older, you'll have 2 doses at least 1 month apart.

Getting vaccinated also helps protect people who cannot be vaccinated, such as unborn babies, newborn babies and anyone with a weakened immune system.

It is never too late to catch up. If anyone has missed one or both doses of the MMR vaccine, contact your GP practice to book a free catch-up vaccination as soon as possible.

Download our [measles toolkit](#) for more information.

Meningococcal disease

Meningococcal disease is a serious but uncommon illness caused by meningococcal bacteria. It can lead to meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) and sepsis (blood poisoning). The onset can be sudden and can look similar to common illnesses like colds or flu. Someone with meningitis or sepsis will usually become seriously ill in a matter of hours, which is why knowing the signs and symptoms, and acting quickly, is so important.

For meningitis, the most important signs to look out for are:

- fever
- a very bad headache
- vomiting
- stiff neck
- dislike of bright lights
- confusion, delirium
- severe sleepiness, losing consciousness
- seizures
- rash (**DO NOT** wait for a rash to appear before seeking medical advice)

For sepsis, the most important signs to look out for are:

- fever and shivering
- severe pains and aches in limbs and joints
- vomiting
- very cold hands and feet
- pale or blotchy skin
- rapid breathing
- diarrhoea and stomach cramps
- red or purple 'bruised' or blotchy rash on skin that do not fade under pressure – do the [glass test](#). On dark skin, check inside the eyelids or roof of the mouth where the spots may be more visible
- difficulty walking or standing
- severe sleepiness, losing consciousness

If you or someone you know becomes unwell and are worried about meningitis or sepsis, seek medical help urgently by going to the nearest Accident and Emergency department or calling 999. Trust your instincts and **do not** wait for all symptoms or for a rash to develop. If a friend goes to bed unwell, check on them regularly. Early treatment can be lifesaving.

The MenACWY vaccine is available free to anyone who has not already had the vaccine up until their 25th birthday. This includes international students. The vaccine protects against 4 common causes of meningococcal disease – MenA, MenC, MenW and MenY but not other forms, like MenB.

A new, time-limited MenB vaccine offer is available this summer (2026) for Year 13 students and under 25s who will be starting university as undergraduates or moving into residential further education settings for the first time in autumn 2026. More information is available at our blog: [Who is eligible for the new one-off MenB vaccine programme? – UK Health Security Agency](#)

STIs

Cases of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) remain high, and these infections continue to particularly affect young people aged 15 to 24 years, and gay and bisexual men. UKHSA is reminding everyone having sex with new or casual partners before or at festivals to wear a condom and get tested for STIs regularly, whatever their age or sexual orientation.

Many people do not show symptoms which means people often pass on STIs without realising it.

STIs can pose serious consequences to your own health and that of your current or future sexual partners. Using condoms is important to prevent spread of STIs and HIV and is a key tool in looking after our sexual health and wellbeing.

Everyone should get an STI screen, including an HIV test at least once a year, if having condomless sex with new or casual partners – even if they don't have any symptoms.

Many services offer online testing, which means people can order self-sampling kits using sexual health services' websites, take them in the privacy of their own home, send them off to a laboratory for testing and receive results either by text, phone call or post.

Local sexual health services can be found online at the [NHS website](#).

[UKHSA has a communications resource document](#) for stakeholders which collates all UKHSA content on STIs.

Hot weather

Festival guests are reminded to stay well during periods of hot weather, especially when walking around the site.

Temperatures above 25°C are associated with excess heat-related deaths, with higher temperatures associated with even greater numbers of excess deaths. The risks are greatest for people with certain conditions:

At 27°C or over, people with impaired sweating mechanisms find it especially difficult to keep their bodies cool (for instance the very young, people with long term health conditions or older people, particularly people taking certain medications).

Heat can exacerbate long term cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, but equally increase the chances of other serious and sudden health issues such as heart attacks, strokes or breathing problems.

To stay well at a festival during periods of hot weather, remember to carry a refillable water bottle with you and drink it throughout the day, wear sun cream and a sunhat and avoid excess alcohol. Keep a look-out for signs of heat-related harm in yourself, your friends, and other people around the festival. The signs include:

- a headache
- dizziness and confusion
- loss of appetite and feeling sick
- excessive sweating and pale, clammy skin
- cramps in the arms, legs and stomach
- fast breathing or pulse
- a high temperature of 38C or above
- being very thirsty

If you experience any of these symptoms, drink some water or diluted fruit juice to rehydrate, find somewhere shaded to sit down and rest and avoid excess alcohol. If symptoms have not gone away after 30 minutes of resting, seek help from one of the medical centres at the festival.

Download our [hot weather toolkit](#) for more information.

Alcohol and Drugs

Safety tips

- Know where medical services and welfare teams are located when you arrive
- Stay hydrated with water or soft drinks between alcoholic beverages
- Choose lower-alcohol drinks for extended drinking sessions
- Never leave drinks unattended
- Don't feel pressured to take substances – most festival-goers don't!
- Take regular breaks from dancing if consuming stimulants
- Stick together with friends and look after each other
- Remember that tolerance levels vary between individuals
- Be aware that some festivals provide naloxone (an opioid overdose antidote) at designated locations
- If driving afterwards, remember substances can remain in your system at detectable levels for days

The dealing in or use of illegal drugs is not condoned at festivals and drug enforcement laws are as applicable on a festival site as anywhere else in the country – you risk being evicted from the site if found with them.

Taking drugs at festivals comes with significant risks:

- Festival environments can intensify adverse reactions due to crowds, noise, and unfamiliar surroundings
- Many substances sold at festivals aren't what dealers claim them to be
- Dangerous substances, like synthetic opioids, have been found mixed with other drugs which can cause life-threatening overdoses

Polydrug use dangers

Using multiple substances together significantly increases risks:

- Mixing alcohol with other drugs is particularly dangerous
- Combined substances can create unpredictable and potentially fatal chemical reactions
- Different substances can multiply harmful effects or create new ones

If you, or someone you know, takes drugs and becomes unwell

If you or someone else experiences unusual effects or becomes unwell after taking any substance:

- Seek immediate help from medical or welfare services on site
- Be honest with healthcare staff about what has been taken so they can provide appropriate treatment

Recognising an overdose

Look out for these warning signs:

- Unconsciousness or unresponsiveness
- Very shallow breathing or no breathing at all
- Loud, raspy 'snoring' or gurgling sounds
- Blue or pale lips or fingertips

If you notice these signs, immediately place the person in the recovery position (on their side) and seek urgent medical help.

For more comprehensive information about drugs and their effects, visit the [Talk to Frank guide to festivals](#).

Communication assets

We have produced some social media assets to support the 2026 festival season, encouraging those attending festivals to stay well.

These resources are available on [Google Drive](#).

Social media assets and copy

Suggested Copy	Social Media Asset	Suggested Alt Text
Off to a festival? 🎪🕶️ Measles is circulating in different parts of the UK. Measles is highly infectious, so check you've had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine for full protection: 🔗 nhs.uk/MMR		HEADING TO A FESTIVAL? Measles is circulating. Make sure you've had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine – you need both for full protection

Heading to a festival this year? Measles is circulating in different parts of the UK. Protect yourself fully against measles by making sure you've had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine. ▼ nhs.uk/MMR		HEADING TO A FESTIVAL? Measles is circulating. Make sure you've had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine – you need both for full protection
Heading to a festival this year? Measles is circulating in different parts of the UK. Check you've had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine for the full protection: nhs.uk/MMR		HEADING TO A FESTIVAL? Measles is circulating. Make sure you've had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine – you need both for full protection
Heading to a festival this year? If it's hot remember to pack the essentials – sunscreen, sunglasses, water, snazzy hat. 🧢 You can find more info on how to beat the heat here: nhs.uk/heatwave		HEADING TO A FESTIVAL? If the forecast is hot remember to prepare - pack sunscreen, drink water, bring a hat and sunglasses

Heading to a festival this year? 🏰 Protect yourself against STIs by using condoms. Get more info on STIs: 🔗 nhs.uk/STIs		HEADING TO A FESTIVAL? Protect yourself from STIs by using condoms. Get tested regularly
Heading to a festival this year? 💧 Wash hands regularly, especially after using the toilet and before eating 👉 Can't find soap? Carry a hand sanitiser 🤧 Cover coughs and sneezes		HEADING TO A FESTIVAL? Wash your hands after using the toilet and before eating if you can to stop germs spreading
Heading to a festival this year? If you are preparing food, make sure to wash fruit and vegetables well and cook meat thoroughly so you don't get food poisoning. 🍎 🥘		HEADING TO A FESTIVAL? Be sure to cook food thoroughly to avoid food poisoning

Blogs

- [How to keep cool and stay well during hot weather – UK Health Security Agency](#)
- [Come rain or shine, adverse weather matters for our health](#)
- [STIs: get tested, get treated](#)
- [Antibiotic-resistant gonorrhoea: staying well while travelling](#)

Press Release Template

Please localise and issue this template ahead of festivals in your area. UKHSA regional comms teams are happy to issue the release jointly and provide a quote, please get in touch with your usual UKHSA regional comms contact.

Attending (insert festival), other festivals or travelling this year? Keep yourselves and others safe

With gates opening for (XXX Festival in XX weeks), festival-goers are being reminded to be aware of ongoing health risks so they can enjoy the festival and other events safely and responsibly this summer.

(XXXX Festival) will be taking place between (XXXXX) this year. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) (INSERT REGION) and XXXX Council are looking forward to the festival, but are reminding visitors of some simple things they can do to stay safe and be aware of possible risks to their health including measles, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), weather related illness and the impact from drugs and alcohol.

Here are the UKHSA's top festival and summer tips:

Get your MMR/V vaccine

Symptoms of measles include a high fever, sore red watery eyes and a blotchy red brown rash and is particularly easy to catch in environments when in close contact with others such as festivals or travelling.

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness, so anyone with symptoms is advised to stay at home and phone their GP or NHS 111 for advice, before visiting the GP surgery or A&E, to prevent the illness spreading further.

By far the best way to protect yourself and those around you from measles is the MMR or MMRV vaccine. The UKHSA urges parents of young children, teenagers and adults to check that they are up to date with their MMR or MMRV vaccines, particularly before they travel this summer and before attending summer festivals where measles can spread more easily. It is never too late to catch up: If anyone has missed one or both doses of the MMR or MMRV vaccine, contact your GP practice to book an appointment.

The MMRV vaccine is recommended for all babies and young children, but older children and adults can have the MMR if they were not vaccinated when they were younger. If you have the vaccine when you're older, you'll have 2 doses at least 1 month apart.

Prepare for the weather

While it's too early for a forecast for this year's festival, it's important to pack for all possibilities.

Remember to pack wellies/sturdy boots as well as appropriate changes of clothing should the weather change, e.g. waterproofs, it can be hot in the day and chilly at night, so bring something to keep you warm too.

Hot weather in particular can pose a health risk for some people. Festival guests are reminded to stay safe during periods of hot weather, especially when walking around the festival.

Remember to carry a refillable water bottle with you and drink it throughout the day, wear sun cream and a sunhat and avoid excess alcohol.

Remember to look out for one another. Keep a lookout for signs of heat-related harm in yourself, your friends, and other people around the Festival.

The signs include:

- a headache
- dizziness and confusion
- loss of appetite and feeling sick
- excessive sweating and pale, clammy skin
- cramps in the arms, legs and stomach
- fast breathing or pulse
- a high temperature of 38C or above
- being very thirsty

If you experience any of these symptoms, drink some water or diluted fruit juice to rehydrate, find somewhere shaded to sit down and rest and avoid excess alcohol. If symptoms have not gone away after 30 minutes of resting, seek help from one of the medical centres at the festival.

Practice safe sex

UKHSA is reminding everyone having sex with new or casual partners before or at the Festival to wear a condom and get tested regularly, whatever their age or sexual orientation.

Testing is free and confidential and you should get tested even if you are not showing any symptoms.

Be tick aware

UKHSA is also encouraging people to 'be tick aware' by regularly checking clothing and exposed skin for ticks that might be crawling on you and brushing them off immediately if outdoors this summer.

Peak tick season in the UK usually begins in March, with most bites commonly reported during May and June and ends in October, although ticks can be active all year round.

The use of insect repellents such as DEET can repel ticks and prevent them from climbing onto clothing or attaching to skin (always follow the manufacturer's instructions).

Safe tick removal:

If you spot a tick, you must remove as soon as possible using a tick-removal tool or fine-tipped tweezers. These can be purchased in pharmacies (and on-site?)

To remove a tick, grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull upwards slowly and firmly.

Avoid illegal substances

The message from [XXX Festival] is not to use illegal substances on the site. The dealing in or use of illegal drugs is not condoned by the festival and drug enforcement laws are as applicable on the festival site as anywhere else in the country – you risk being evicted from the site if found with them.

Festival attendees are reminded if they do ignore that advice and become ill or experience unusual effects from any substances taken, to seek immediate help from the medical or welfare services on site who can provide help and support.

Polydrug use – using more than one drug at a time – intensifies the effects of the drugs, making them more dangerous. Mixing alcohol alongside other drugs is one of the most common forms of polydrug use and can seriously increase the strength and impact of those substances, increasing the chances of a potentially fatal chemical reaction.

An overdose won't always look the same but some of the signs to look out for are:

- falling unconscious
- very light shallow breathing or no breathing
- loud raspy 'snoring' or gurgling
- blue or pale lips or fingertips
- If in doubt, seek medical attention immediately.

XXXXXXX, Consultant in Health Protection at UKHSA XXXXX, said:

"We want festival-goers to enjoy their time at (XXXX) and other festivals this year. Being aware of the current health risks will help those attending enjoy their time, as much as possible.

"Measles is circulating across the country, and festivals are the perfect place for measles to spread. If you're not fully vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella, please contact your GP to see if you can get an appointment before coming to the festival. If you feel unwell or have been advised isolate as a result of measles or another infection, please continue to do so.

"Cases of STIs remain high, particularly in young people aged 15 to 24 years, and gay and bisexual men. STIs aren't just an inconvenience – they can have a major impact on your health and that of any sexual partners.

"Condoms are the best defence, but if you didn't use one the last time you had sex with a new or casual partner, get tested to detect any potential infections early and prevent passing them on to others. Testing is important because you may not have any symptoms of an STI."

XXXXXXX at xxxxx Council, said: (if using)

"Keeping yourself safe over the (xxx festival) weekend is paramount. Most health risks can be avoided by taking simple steps to help protect yourself, remembering to keep yourself cool and avoid excess alcohol can help keep you safe during periods of hot weather.

"We are encouraging everyone who attends the Festival to take some basic steps to protect themselves and others:

- Familiarise yourself with the health and safety advice on the (insert link to festival website) and app before you travel and encourage your friends to do the same
- Avoid travelling if you are feeling acutely unwell.
- Stay hydrated and avoid excessive alcohol consumption, particularly in hot weather
- Wash hands regularly and carry hand sanitiser with you
- Never take a BBQ into a tent - despite being out in the fresh air, carbon monoxide can build up to levels that can kill very quickly in enclosed spaces
- Stay safe in the sun by using sun lotion, wearing a hat and seeking shade in the hottest parts of the day

Seek advice if you become unwell – there are medical facilities around the festival site, including two dispensing and retail pharmacies."

Useful Links

MMR and Measles

- NHS: [Further information about the MMR vaccine](#)
- NHS: [Further information about measles](#)
- NHS: [Routine immunisation schedule](#)

Sexual Health

- [NHS guide to sexual health services](#)
- [Information about sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#)

Heat Health

- [The NHS has guidance on hot weather health](#)
- [Signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat health](#)
- [Hot weather advice for mass gatherings](#)
- [Heat health alerts](#)

Drugs and alcohol

- [The Frank Guide to Festivals](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Timeline of UK Festivals and Pride Events

Please note these tables feature the most popular events in the UK and are not exhaustive.

Timeline of UK Festivals 2026

Date	Festival	Location
27 June – 12 July	BST Hyde Park	London
23–26 July	Latitude	Suffolk
24–26 July	Tramlines	Sheffield
30 July – 2 Aug	Y Not Festival	Derbyshire
30 July – 2 August	Camp Bestival	Dorset
31 July – 2 August	Valley Fest	Bristol
5–9 August	Boardmasters	Newquay
7–31 August	Edinburgh Fringe	Edinburgh
12–16 August	Boomtown	Hampshire
21–23, 28–30 August	All Points East	London
27–30 August	Reading Festival	Reading
27–30 August	Leeds Festival	Leeds
27–30 August	Creamfields	Cheshire

28–30 August	Victorious	Portsmouth
29–30 August	Forwards	Bristol
29–31 August	Notting Hill Carnival	London
11–13 September	BBC Radio 2 in the Park	Stirling

Timeline of UK Pride Events 2026

Date	Event
10–12 July	Brighton Bear Weekend
10–12 July	Bournemouth Pride / Bourne Free
11 July	Plymouth Pride
11 July	Bristol Pride
18 July	Isle of Wight Pride
18–19 July	Leeds Pride
25 July	Barnsley Pride
24–26 July	Liverpool Pride
25–26 July	Northern Pride (Newcastle)
1–2 August	Brighton Pride
8 August	Bromyard Pride
15 August	Caldicot Pride
28–31 August	Manchester Pride

About the UK Health Security Agency

UKHSA is responsible for protecting every member of every community from the impact of infectious diseases, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents and other health threats. We provide intellectual, scientific and operational leadership at national and local level, as well as on the global stage, to make the nation health secure.

[UKHSA](#) is an executive agency, sponsored by the [Department of Health and Social Care](#).

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency

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