

Walking Off the Midway Munchies

Alice Henneman, MS, RD
(402) 441-7180/ <http://lancaster.unl.edu/food>

Lancaster County

444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A / Lincoln, NE 68528



Fairs involve a lot of walking, so we'll probably burn off those extra fair food calories — right?

Maybe ... If we walk up to 1.5 miles for a bag of cotton candy and three miles for a funnel cake!

Big portions with lots of sugar and fat calories characterize many of the foods we traditionally associate with fairs. For many of us, attending the fair wouldn't be nearly as much fun without these tasty treats. Some may be once-a-year foods for us, and we look forward to (insert your favorite here) at the fair.

So ... How much exercise does it take to walk off our favorite fair foods?

We know on average, we have to walk about one mile to burn 100 calories. To visualize how far that is, think approximately 12 city blocks to the mile. While calories per our favorite fair food can vary depending on portion size, recipe, and more, burning off the calories of that cotton candy mentioned above could be an 18-block walk.

Following are the approximate distances we need to walk to burn off the calories of some popular midway foods:

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

Does this mean we need to load a picnic basket with carrot and celery sticks before heading to the fair? No. With a little planning, it's possible to fit in many favorite fair foods. 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 fair-day calories for something else.
- Split foods among several people. For example, share a large funnel cake with friends. Everyone gets a taste, and no one gets overloaded!
- Plan times when you'll sit down and eat, rather than graze your way from one end of the fair to the other. It's hard to keep a handle on how much we're eating when we're walking, talking and eating at the same time.
- Limit yourself to one treat. Choose reasonable serving sizes of lower sugar and lower fat items for the rest of your foods.
- Dress in comfortable shoes so you're more likely to walk off some calories. Wear a pedometer and see how many steps you can take at the fair. One mile equals about 2,000 steps, or around one third of the calories in a typical caramel apple.
- Check out all the food booths before making your selections. Imagine you have a "calorie salary." Enjoy the foods you like the most for your "salary."
- 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 our weight that much — weeks of it will! Eating 100 extra calories daily can result in a 10 pound weight gain yearly.

Related Links

- "Walk Nebraska" — a virtual walk across Nebraska at <http://www.walknebraska.org>
- "Walk Your Way to Health" record sheet at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/walk.pdf> (6/07)

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