

Seven Ways to Make Your Barbecues Healthier



One of the most popular rites of summer is the outdoor cookout. Unfortunately, evidence suggests that foods cooked on a charcoal, gas, or electric grill may be hazardous to your health.

The National Academy of Science has discovered a possible link between the grilling of food and the development of what are believed to be cancercausing compounds. Some researchers suspect that when high-fat, highprotein foods—like hamburgers—are exposed to the intense, searing heat of barbecue cooking, the fat and protein turn into mutagens—chemicals that can damage the genetic material of cells and possibly cause cancer.

Since the jury is still out on whether or not grilled food definitely causes cancer, it's probably wise to reserve barbecuing for special occasions, ratherthan grill food regularly.

Some other guidelines to reduce the potential risks from eating grilled food include:

- Before cooking meat or poultry (or fish, if applicable), trim away fat. And don't baste foods to be grilled with butter or oil.
- Keep a spray water bottle handy to douse flare-ups.
- Position food well above the heat source.
- If noticeable amounts of fat drip and flare up as food cooks, lower the flame or move the food to another part of the grill.
- Cook food until it's done, but avoid charring it. The longer food is grilled and the blacker it gets, the higher the risk.
- To avoid charring fish and vegetables, wrap them in aluminum foil.
- Many foods, like chicken, can be boiled or microwaved before grilling, to reduce fat content and grilling time.