



Fire up for Father's Day

Burgers and dogs, steak and ribs, chicken and lamb. Delicious grilled dinners are a father's day staple for executives. Yet this favorite summer cooking method can be hazardous to your health. Although the surgeon general hasn't placed a health warning on BBQ equipment or supplies, a National Cancer Institute study has linked lab animal cancers with meat cooked at high temperatures. The findings indicate that when meat is cooked at higher-than-boiling heat the amino acids react with creatine to form carcinogenic chemicals called heterocyclic aromatic amines also known as HAAS.

And where there is fire there is smoke. That heavenly aroma wafting from the grill carries polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons as well as liberated benzopyrenes - carcinogens that may contribute to lung damage. As reported by the BBC, a study by the French environmental campaigning group Robin des Bois found that a typical two-hour barbecue can release the same level of dioxins as nearly 220,000 cigarettes.

So how dangerous is grilling? Desmond Hammerton, a retired professor of Marine Biology, believes warnings should be included on barbecue equipment. He states, "I'm sure that just the odd barbecue during the summer is not going to have any effect. But if you have a barbecue once or twice a week through the summer, and all crowd round it and inhale the fumes then over 10 or 20 years maybe that would do something."

There are many ways to keep grilling and cut your risks. One favorite finding is to enjoy a cold dark beer with your BBQ. In an article published in the January 1999 issue of the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, Japanese researchers demonstrated how 24 beers they tested showed "potent inhibitory effect" against mutagens found in several types of HAAS.

If you'd rather sip something else, changing your grilling technique can make a difference. For the traditional grill, use cooler burning fuels such as hardwood or charcoal. For gas grills, cook slowly at medium heat. In both cases, place a drip pan under the meat to minimize fat fires. You can also precook meat in the microwave or parboil as some researchers have found that even a short amount of pre-cooking can decrease heterocyclic amines by nearly 90 percent. Turning meat often helps moderate the heat, but avoid piercing the meat when flipping to keep the juice from causing a flare up. A



clean grill is also important as stuck residues are concentrated in hydrocarbons and can contaminate your fresh foods.

Always avoid charring the meat since the carcinogens are concentrated in the blackened portions.

And don't forget that carcinogenic substances only form on foods rich in saturated fats. So ultimately, the best grilling safety solution is to choose a menu with leaner meat such as fish or seafood and lots of fat free vegetables and fruits.

If you have questions about your diet, contact your doctor at Executive MD for recommendations. For all the Father's reading this article – have a happy and healthy day.

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