



Safe Grilling

In addition to handling food safely to avoid food-borne illnesses there are ways to reduce your exposure to cancer-causing compounds that form when certain foods are grilled at high temperatures. According to current research there are four factors that affect the formation of these potentially harmful compounds: type of food, cooking method, temperature, and time.

The American Institute of Cancer Research (AICR) is an excellent source of information about current research related to food and cancer. Here is their seasonal warning about grilling that highlights a few key points:

- ***What you grill may be the most important issue.***

Red meat (beef, pork and lamb) and processed meat (such as hot dogs) top the list of foods to minimize or keep off the grill in light of recent research linking these foods to cancer – regardless of how they are prepared. Since grilling meat, poultry and fish produces cancer-causing compounds, grilling meat is essentially a double whammy.

The AICR recommends limiting red meat to 18 ounces (cooked) per week. Since the stats for processed meats are even more troubling the AICR now recommends avoiding hot dogs and other processed meats altogether.

- **Grilling vegetables and fruit produces no cancer-causing compounds.**

Many components of these foods are linked to a lower risk of many cancers. Summer is a great time to experiment with grilling alternatives.

Since grilling fish and poultry does produce the potentially harmful compounds here are the AICR's recommendations for reducing grilling risks:

- Select smaller cuts of meat, such as kabobs, and limit your portion size.
- Select leaner cuts, to prevent dripping fat from causing flare-ups, which deposit carcinogens on the meat.
- You can also reduce flare-ups by spreading aluminum foil on the grill. Make small holes in the foil to allow fat to drain.
- Try a marinade. Some laboratory research suggests that even briefly marinating meat significantly reduces the formation of HCAs.
- Partially pre-cook meat briefly in the microwave before grilling, to speed up grilling time.
- Flip meat frequently, which reduces the amount of carcinogens that arise.