

Celiac disease shouldn't keep family from BBQ fun: experts

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Making sure gluten-free kids remain that way when away from home is challenging, but doable.

(HealthDay)—Attending a Fourth of July barbecue or picnic can be great fun for the whole family, but parents need to take special precautions if one of their children has celiac disease, an expert warns.

"When going to a cookout, parents with a child who is gluten-free because of [celiac disease](#) or a wheat allergy need to make sure that cross-contamination has been avoided and that they read labels carefully. Especially if gathering with a group who may not understand the particulars of a [gluten-free diet](#)," Mary Kay Sharrett, from the Celiac Disease Center at Nationwide Children's Hospital, said in a hospital news release.

Parents of a child with celiac disease should bring some gluten-free dishes to a cookout, such as baked beans, corn on the cob, gluten-free potato salad or a bowl of mixed berries. This will ensure that the child has something they know is safe to eat. Bring a gluten-free bun or get creative and use a large piece of lettuce as a substitute for a hamburger bun, Sharrett suggested.

"Closely watch the condiments. Read the labels, and if squeeze bottles aren't being used, try to be first in line to avoid contamination from knives that have touched bread containing gluten," Sharrett said.

Parents should ask if the meat being grilled is plain. Seasoning or soup mixes containing wheat may have been added to the meat, and many marinades or sauces contain wheat. Be alert for meat substitutes, such as veggie burgers. They often look like meat but contain wheat.

Wrap your food in foil while grilling. This is crucial if you don't know if the grill has been cleaned, especially after marinades containing gluten have been used or buns have been warmed on the grill. Make sure your spatula only touches plain meats or vegetables and doesn't get contaminated with marinade or bun remnants on the grill.

"The long-term effect of anyone with celiac [disease](#) being exposed to gluten is damage to the [intestine](#). Some kids experience symptoms immediately," Sharrett said. "As a result, many parents choose to eat at home in a controlled environment, but group cookouts are possible if you are cautious."

More information: The Nemours Foundation has more about [celiac disease](#).

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