

Stay safe from the sun and that backyard grill this Memorial Day

May 27 2024, by Ernie Mundell



Memorial Day means firing up that backyard grill for the season, hopefully under warm, sunny skies.

You can be sure to enjoy the day without hazards by taking a few simple precautions, said Dr. Mike Ren, an associate professor of family and [community medicine](#) at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Watch out for rising heat and humidity

If Memorial day is a scorcher, hydration is key, Ren said.

"A good rule of thumb is to drink water regularly throughout the day, aiming for 12 or more cups; when in the heat, drink one cup (eight ounces) of water roughly every 20 minutes," he advised.

And stay away from substances that can rob your body of water.

"Alcohol is a diuretic, meaning it increases urine production and can lead to fluid loss," Ren noted in a Baylor news release.

"On the other hand, [sugary drinks](#) can cause spikes and crashes in blood sugar levels," he added. "Prioritizing water consumption is crucial for maintaining proper hydration levels. If you want to add a little flavor, low or zero-sugar electrolyte powders and supplements can be a good alternative."

Shield your skin from the sun

Folks may have forgotten the sun's dangers as winter and spring ebb away. Dr. John Wolf, professor of dermatology at Baylor, recommends slapping on a sunscreen with an SPF of 30, and using SPF 50 when participating in vigorous outdoor activities.

Insects abound

Warmer weather means the return of flies, wasps, mosquitoes and other flying insects. To avoid stings, use [insect repellents](#) that include 20% to 30% DEET or picaridin and wear [protective clothing](#) with long sleeves and pants.

"Colorful clothing may attract insects," Wolf added. "Avoid wearing strong perfumes in [wooded areas](#) and those with standing water that are likely to harbor mosquitoes and other insects."

Grilling can bring hazards

Gas grills harbor their own dangers, and every year Americans are harmed using these backyard broilers. Dr. Sara Andrabi, an assistant professor of emergency medicine at Baylor, said the first order of business for [grill](#) users is to make sure the appliance is properly cleaned of the remains of last year's grilling.

"Location wise, make sure your grill is on a flat, stable surface and is away from buildings, decks or overhanging branches. Have a [fire extinguisher](#) ready, just in case," she said.

Loose clothing and long sleeves are a no-no when working around a grill's open flame, Andrabi added. Grills are especially dangerous for kids and pets, so never leave a working grill unattended.

Andrabi also had some tips about the foods you place on the grill. First off, take the time to let any frozen meat or other food thaw gently in the refrigerator, not a kitchen counter.

"When frozen food gets warmer or is at room temperature for more than a few hours, it's in the danger zone where bacteria can multiply very quickly," Andrabi explained.

And, "if you store raw meats in the refrigerator, store them away from other foods to prevent cross-contamination," she said. "Once grilled, use a food thermometer to know that your meats have reached the appropriate temperature."

More information: The American Red Cross has more on [summer safety](#).

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