

Fire up the grill safely this holiday weekend

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(HealthDay)—Safety should be on the front burner when you fire up the barbecue this Memorial Day, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) says.

Propane used in gas grills is highly flammable and about 30 people in the United States are injured each year due to gas grill fires and explosions. Many of these incidents occur when someone lights a grill that hasn't been used in a while, or just after refilling and reattaching the gas container.

The CPSC said people should routinely perform a number of safety checks. Check the tubes that lead into the burner for blockages from insects or food grease. Use a pipe cleaner or wire to clear a blockage and push it through to the main part of the burner.

Inspect gas hoses for cracking, brittleness, holes and leaks, and make sure there are no sharp bends in the hose or tubing. Keep gas hoses as far away as possible from hot surfaces and dripping hot grease. If you can't move the hoses, install a heat shield to protect them.

If you smell gas, immediately turn off the gas and follow the manufacturer's instructions to check for gas leaks. Do not try to light the grill until the leak is fixed.

Never use a grill indoors, or in a garage, breezeway, carport, porch, or under any surface that can catch fire. When using a grill, keep it at least 10 feet away from the house or other building.

Always store propane containers upright, and never store spare containers under or near the grill or indoors.

Charcoal barbecues also pose safety risks. When burned, [charcoal](#) produces carbon monoxide (CO), a colorless, odorless gas that can accumulate to dangerous levels in closed spaces. Each year in the United States, about 30 people die and 100 are injured as a result of CO fumes from charcoal grills and hibachis used inside, according to the CPSC.

Never burn charcoal inside homes, vehicles, tents or campers. Charcoal produces CO until the charcoal is completely extinguished, so never store the grill indoors with freshly used coals.

Another potential barbecue-related safety threat is wire bristles from grill brushes. The bristles can break off, land on the grate and end up in grilled meats. If ingested, the bristles can cause potentially life-threatening injuries to the throat and digestive tract.

Instead of a wire brush, use grill-cleaning stones and bricks, bristle-free brushes made of metal coil, or grill brushes with nylon bristles, the experts suggest.

If you must use a wire brush, wipe the grate with a wet paper towel after using the brush and inspect the [grill](#) closely before cooking.

There's another option that's not likely to be popular with the grilling crowd.

"You also could become a vegetarian," said Dr. David Grand, associate professor of diagnostic imaging at Brown University. "We've only seen bristles lodged in meat. We haven't found any in grilled vegetables."

More information: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has more on [barbecue safety](#).

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