

6 Tips to an Asthma-Safe Barbecue

The Fourth of July is almost here, and it's time for family barbecues and summer fun. This All-American holiday can be challenging for kids with asthma, since many barbecue staples, like ribs, hot dogs (and the smoke from barbecue grills) can cause wheezing and other respiratory problems. Follow these barbecue tips for a healthy, asthma-free 4th of July.

1-Choose Asthma-Friendly Foods and Store Them Properly

If you're going to a friend's barbecue, ask the barbecue's host if you can bring your own food. When packing foods for a barbecue, avoid anything that triggers your child's asthma, and place healthy choices in sealed containers. Sliced fruits and veggies, sunflower seeds and Omega-3 rich salmon are a good addition to any asthma-friendly summer barbecue, and everyone can enjoy them.

Store foods in an insulated, ice-packed cooler at 40F or below to prevent bacteria from forming while you transport them. Keep the cooler in a shady area once you arrive at the barbecue.

2- Prevent Cross-Contamination at the Table

Use a separate plastic utensil for every food served to prevent cross-contamination. Bring extra cups, plates and napkins so no one has to share items. Individual packets of ketchup, mayonnaise, mustard are a great alternative to shared condiment containers. Use a plastic tablecloth to keep asthma-triggering food particles from previous meals from coming in contact with your child's meal.

3-Bring Asthma Medication

Bring your child's asthma medication and inhaler to the barbecue. Even if you've taken precautions to keep smoke and asthma-causing foods away from your child, cross-contamination may occur, especially at large gatherings. You should also check cell phone coverage in case of an emergency if you're attending a barbecue in a forest preserve or out-of-the way area. If pollen triggers your child's asthma, check the pollen count for the day of the barbecue. If the count is too high, you may want to decline the invitation or limit the time you spend at the barbecue.

4- Eat before the other guests or have food grilled separately

Ask the host to grill your child's food first to avoid cross-contamination with possible allergens or place it on a clean piece of aluminum foil while cooking. Serve guests with

asthma or allergies first, before others can cross-contaminate it with condiments or toppings.

5- Stay Away from The Grill

Smoke from barbecue grills can cause wheezing and other asthma symptoms in kids with asthma. Cooks may use mesquite, oak or cedar wood chips when grilling to flavor food, but these wood types retain pollen and allergens even when burned. When smoke from wood chips come in contact with an asthma sufferer's skin, eyes and nasal passages, it may cause wheezing and other symptoms. Keep your child away from the barbecue grill (and the direction of the smoke emanating from it), or keep the grill covered during cooking. Soot from charcoal-burning barbecues trigger runny noses, sneezing and constricts airways in children with asthma and may release carcinogens into the air. If possible, use a gas or electric grill for an asthma-friendly experience.

Barbecue smoke may cause other health problems beside asthma. When grilling, precook foods and use marinades with vinegar or lemon to prevent cancer causing polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs.) These chemical compounds occur when juices from meat drip onto hot surfaces and cause smoke. Charring fish or meat at high temperatures produces heterocyclic amines (HCAs), which are also found in cigarette smoke.

6- Bring Disinfecting Wipes or Anti-Bacterial Gel

Pack anti-bacterial gel or disinfecting wipes to clean up after meals. This prevents cross-contamination from tiny food particles that can trigger asthma attacks. During picnics and other summer outings, kids spend a lot of time playing with other kids, and food particles can show up on toys or baseball gloves, so your child should clean up with disinfectant wipes after eating or playing .

Links:

<http://www.everydayhealth.com/asthma/cooking-with-asthma.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Summerhealth/Pages/Barbecuefoodsafety.aspx>

<http://allergyhealthnews.com/2012/07/18/barbecue-allergy/>

<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art67629.asp>

<http://www.aafa.org/display.cfm?id=9&sub=16&cont=38>

<http://www.childhealthtx.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/EN-Environmental-control-measures.pdf>

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/HEALTH/07/02/how.make.grilling.safe/>

<http://www.aaaai.org/allergist/news/Pages/SixUnexpectedAllergensthatcanCauseBackyardBlues.aspx>

<http://cdphp.smtmoves.com/beware-outdoor-allergy-triggers>

<http://allergicliving.com/2010/07/02/ask-the-celiac-expert/>

<http://www.aaaai.org/allergist/news/New/Pages/avoiding-summer-asthma-allergy-triggers.aspx>

http://www.healthcommunities.com/healthy-living-guides/index.shtml/healthy-barbecue--food-safety-tips_77

<http://gogreeninside.com/eco-awareness/is-bbq-hazardous-to-your-health-top-10-tips-for-a-safer-and-healthier-grilling-experience/>