

Q.

How can I make summer-grilling season healthier?

A.

You might be thinking about firing up the grill to cook a meal about now.

But don't get the briquettes or propane burner flaming hot just yet.

Munching your way through char-grilled meat or fish isn't the best way to go. Why? Grilling beef, pork, fish, and poultry at high temperatures can cause an unhealthy reaction in the meat. It's a recipe for heterocyclic amines (HCAs) linked to cancer.¹

Here's what happens: When fat drops down during grilling and burns, it goes back into the food. This is how food gets charred during grilling. It's also how HCAs are formed.² But that doesn't mean you have to forget about summer-season grilling.

Here are four ways to make grilling healthier:

1. Use a grill in the oven

If you want to grill something, use a grill in the oven where you can grill from above. Grilling from above helps prevent charring and HCAs. Try grilling your meat in the



oven, and use the barbecue grill to cook vegetables.

2. Choose plant-based burgers

Use a barbecue grill. But instead of meat, try grilling plant-based burgers such as black-bean burgers or garden burgers. These are less likely to form harmful HCAs from grilling than meats.

3. Grill fruits and vegetables

Here's another barbecue-friendly option. Make kebabs with your favorites like zucchini, tomatoes, potato wedges, egg plant, mushrooms, and pineapple chunks.

Or grill corn-on-the-cob wrapped in foil. Fruits and vegetables don't form HCAs. Just cook at a moderate temperature and avoid burning or blackening food.

4. Season foods with herbs and spices

instead of sauces high in calories. Or marinate foods before grilling. Research shows this can help prevent HCAs from forming.²

ASK THE **Wellness** DOCTOR

Discover the benefits of grilling at home. If you've been thinking about eating at home more often, give healthy grilling a try.

Research shows that cooking at home can help you eat healthier foods, control calories, lose weight, or maintain a healthy weight.³

You hungry? Fire up the grill. Turn down the heat and enjoy a home-cooked meal.

References

1. National Cancer Institute. (2017). Chemicals in meat cooked at high temperatures and cancer risk. National Institutes of Health. From: <https://tinyurl.com/hz887t4>
2. American Institute for Cancer Research. (2019). Cancer experts issue warnings on grilling safety. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y78dn4x6>
3. Mills, S., et al. (2017). Frequency of eating home cooked meals and potential benefits for diet and health: cross-sectional analysis of a population-based cohort study. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 14(109). From: <https://tinyurl.com/ydehmlpd>