

Summer safety tips: How to stay away from harm

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Washington — More than hot dogs and hamburgers get burned when safety's forgotten while rallying 'round the grill.

Kids rough-housing at the barbecue scene sometimes suffer burns in a collision with the smoking grill. Chefs who mix heavy drinking with the cookery have been hurt, too, notes Tod Turriff, manager of the National Safety Council's Public Safety Department.

The worst injuries occur when the cook, safety rules dimmed by booze, picks up a can of liquid starter to boost charcoal burning, Turriff says in a summer safety primer. Heat from the dying fire rides the stream of fuel back into the can, igniting the contents.

The fire that comes next has severely burned many a cookout chef. Other tips to keep people of all

sizes and ages from sending themselves to the hospital or mortuary during the pursuit of summer fun are from the American Council on Science and Health.

Barbeque tips

1. No glasses; no bare feet. Use plastic or paper containers. The no-bare-feet rule keeps feet from cuts if glass (which ketchup and mustard and other cookout goodies come in) breaks. Shoes also spare bare soles from burns if hot coals pop out of grill.

2. Never use gasoline to start the fire. Never squirt commercial starter on live coals. If using an electric starter, put it in an out-of-the-way place to cool down.

3. If it rains and you move the grill indoors — even into the garage — you've got more than a fire hazard on your hands. Burning charcoal releases carbon monoxide: a

colorless, odorless, tasteless and extremely dangerous gas. It's a killer. Provide plenty of ventilation.

Food poisoning prevention

1. Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot to prevent bacterial food poisoning. Mayonnaise in potato salad and similar dishes at summer picnics does not cause food poisoning. Rather it is improper storage of the food.

2. Perishable foods, with or without mayonnaise, may not be safe to eat if kept at temperatures of 60 degrees Fahrenheit or higher for more than three or four hours.

3. Raw meat should be kept in a cooler with ice or reusable cold packs until ready to cook. Keep the meat separate from other foods in the cooler. Uncooked meat contains relatively large numbers of bacteria, some of which could be harmful if they taint other food. Cooking kills

the common food poisoning types in meat.

Around water

1. Drownings, around 7,000 a year, are the third leading cause of accidental death, behind motor vehicle accidents and falls. Among those age 1 to 44, it is the second leading cause of accidental death.

2. Until they are teenagers, children should never be left alone in or around backyard swimming pools — or any place where swimming or water is a main attraction.

3. Swimming and drinking don't mix.

4. Boating and drinking don't mix. Safety experts now believe that about half the boating accidents are due to drunken skippers.

5. Many a neck is broken when swimmers dive into strange waters, not knowing the depth or about tree trunks or other submerged debris.

Never dive into strange waters without first establishing that the depth is safe. Never dive into an above the ground pool. They're not deep enough.

6. A life vest — personal flotation device — for all aboard watercraft is required by the U.S. Coast Guard. Boaters should observe other USCG rules including the one that requires having a fire extinguisher aboard.

Summer sun

1. Excessive sun exposure, like all ultraviolet irradiation, can also cause skin cancer. Ultraviolet light from the sun is the most widespread environmental carcinogen.

2. Moderation is the key to safe sunbathing, along with some well-planned protection via sunscreens or sunblockers. Sun blockers such as zinc oxide block out tanning and burning rays; nothing gets through. Sunscreens block out the burning

but allow tanning rays through. Sun creams and lotions are identified by a rating system devised by the Food and Drug Administration. The higher the number, the bigger the SPF — sun protection factor. SPF ratings range from 2 (minimum protection) to 15 or more. Low SPF products are for people who tan quickly and never burn. Fair-skinned types and others who burn easily should choose high-SPF products.

3. Clothing and hats are effective sunscreens.

4. Cocoa butter, baby oil and mineral oil are not sunscreens.

5. Some medicines can cause photosensitivity, making a person more susceptible to the ultraviolet light, and more likely to get a sunburn. A doctor or pharmacist can tell you if a prescription drug you are taking is likely to cause this problem.

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