

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Backyard Barbeques Just Got Healthier!

Coldwater, MI. Fresh fruits, veggies and grilled meats - summer is the perfect time to start making healthier eating choices and the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is here to help. “Backyard barbeques that feature grilled vegetables and lean meats is a healthier alternative to heavily processed foods, which are usually high in fat” says Paul Andriacchi, Environmental Health Director on behalf of the tri-county health department. “Grilling smart means knowing what to grill and the healthiest ways to prepare your food.” To help you make smart and healthy choices, the health department offers the following four tips:

- **Start with lean meats.** Select ground beef that is 93% to 95% lean or select ground sirloin or ground round meats when possible. Or reach for turkey burger instead. Fish is another great alternative – especially salmon and tuna which are high in omega-3 fatty acids and taste delicious when grilled. Limit processed meats like hot dogs and sausages which are high in both fat and sodium and contain nitrates.
- **Don't overcook the meat.** While charring meats adds flavor, it can also release specific hydrocarbons that are known carcinogens. To avoid the release of these carcinogens, be sure to clean your grill prior to using it and cook your meat over a lower heat to its proper internal temperature.
- **Use marinades.** There are lots of marinades available in the grocery aisle. Or try creating a unique marinade from some of the following items in the pantry: oil, lemon juice, garlic, honey and mustard. Adding in fresh herbs like rosemary and thyme, which are high in antioxidants, can improve both the flavor and

healthfulness of the foods. Not only do marinades add to the taste of meats, they also have been shown to reduce the amount of carcinogens released during grilling.

- **Load Up on Veggies.** Make veggies part of the main entrée: Add chopped onion and green pepper to your burger prior to making up patties. Grill meat and veggie kabobs or add extra firm tofu to the kabob instead for a vegetarian alternative. Grilled veggies such as mushrooms, zucchini, tomatoes, onions, yellow squash and eggplant make great sides. Just brush them with a little marinade or spray them with olive oil cooking spray and grill to slightly blackened. Or just throw some ears of corn, still in the husk, on the grill for 30 minutes and enjoy!

Summertime offers lots of opportunities for healthy living. Be sure to enjoy this summer by taking steps to eat healthy, be active and be outdoors. To find opportunities that will lead to health improvements for you and your whole family, visit our website at www.bhsj.org or to receive more healthful, nutrition tips that your whole family will enjoy, like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/bhsjwic>.

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