



BASILDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Please contact 01268 294280 if you would like further advice

What do I need to know about barbecues?

One of the many pleasures of the summer months is eating out of doors. However, every year, the number of food poisoning cases rises significantly between June and September, with sufferers experiencing sickness, diarrhoea (or both), and discomfort. Some of these cases are unfortunately linked to barbecue meals. Popular barbecue food items like burgers, kebabs, steaks and chicken can become carriers of harmful bugs if not handled or cooked properly. These germs can cause illness in anyone who eats them, particularly babies, young children and elderly people.

The barbecue itself can also be dangerous. Each year, there are many barbecue accidents needing medical treatment. Most accidents involve boys under 8 years, who are more likely to be playing near a burning barbecue.

The tips in this leaflet, will help you to enjoy a safe barbecue:

Setting up the barbecue?

- ✓ Only use a barbecue out of doors.
- ✓ If you have a gas barbecue, check gas pipe lines before use and ensure that the gas cylinder is connected correctly. If you need to change the gas cylinder, ensure that the gas supply is switched off and that no combustible materials are nearby.
- ✓ Ensure that the barbecue is strong and sturdy and sited on a level surface in an area away from overhanging trees, wooden fencing, sheds, tents, etc.

Lighting the barbecue?

- X Don't add lighter fuel, petrol, meths, or paraffin to a burning or warm barbecue.
- ✓ Prepare the barbecue early so that it is at the right temperature by the time you want to cook (the coals should be glowing red with a powdery grey surface).
- ✓ If there is a wind blowing, make sure that it is blowing away from you when you light the barbecue (just in case it flares up).
- ✓ Use impregnated bags of charcoal, or fire lighters.
- ✓ If you choose to use lighter fluid, follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

- ✓ Light the barbecue at arms length (rather like fireworks) and do not put your face over the range.
- ✓ Keep a bucket of water nearby, just in case!!

Cooking on the barbecue?

- X Don't spray lighter fluid onto a hot barbecue – even if you think the gas fire has gone out – it may blow up in your face.
- X Don't move the barbecue when in use.
- X The person supervising the barbecue should not drink alcohol, or wear trailing clothing, but should use long handled tools and flame retardant gloves.
- ✓ Keep children and pets away from a hot barbecue and limit the number of people in the vicinity. Ensure matches and lighters are placed out of the reach of children. Never leave a lit barbecue unattended.
- ✓ Fully defrost food in the refrigerator before cooking, unless the instructions state otherwise. Keep marinating meat and poultry in the fridge. Don't re-use the marinade.
- ✓ Wash vegetables and salad items carefully to remove any soil and dirt, then wash soil from your hands, kitchen surfaces and other kitchen facilities.
- ✓ Keep all food refrigerated or in a "cool box" until just before it is cooked or consumed.
- ✓ Wash hands thoroughly before preparing food, after touching raw meat and before eating.
- ✓ Keep serving bowls, food and utensils covered to protect from dust and insects. Keep pets away from food, dishes and preparation surfaces.
- ✓ Always use separate utensils, chopping boards, etc. for preparing or transferring the raw and handling the cooked meat. Even on the barbecue try to keep the raw and cooked foods separate.
- X Never put cooked food on plates that held raw meat.
- X Never part cook food on the barbecue and finish cooking later. However, you can fully cook meat and chicken at home and then barbecue it to add flavour. This is the ideal way to avoid undercooking your meat on the barbecue.
- ✓ Barbecues can be too hot in parts and not hot enough in others. Move food around the barbecue and turn it regularly to avoid over-charring the outside and ensure that the inside is not under-cooked. A brown or charred appearance doesn't mean meat is cooked right through! Make sure burgers, sausages and chicken in particular are cooked until they are piping hot, there is no pinkness inside, and the juices run clear.

- ✓ Be careful of the steam when opening foil parcels – it may burn.
- ✓ Keep the food piping hot until it is eaten. Don't reheat barbecue food – throw it away if not eaten within 2 hours.
- ✓ Remember to protect yourself with sunscreen even if the sky is overcast.

After the barbecue?

- ✓ Leave the barbecue to cool completely in an appropriate place before handling. Barbecues and the coals can sometimes still be hot enough to burn the day after use.

If you would like some more advice, please call Environmental Health Services on 01268 294280, and ask to speak to one of the Food Safety Officers.