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Healthy Eating All Summer Long

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Summer is here so it's time to clean off the patio furniture and fire up the grill. Barbecue can be a great time to enjoy the great outdoors and socialize with friends; however they can also be full of fat or sugar laden foods. So how can you eat healthy and manage your weight this summer so you look good in that swimsuit all season?

The following tips will help you achieve this goal:

- 1. Choose lean meats to grill.** Hamburgers and hot dogs are the staples of any barbecue but they can be high in fat even before you add cheese. So first start off with a lean cut of meat. For instance buy at least 80% lean ground beef or switch to lean ground turkey or chicken. Next fill up more on lettuce, tomato, and onions versus cheese. If you must have cheese on your burger, select a lower fat cheese such as Swiss or reduced fat cheddar cheese. For condiments stick with small portions or lower calorie options such as mustard. Lastly go easy on your serving size and try to avoid having 2 or 3 hamburgers to save calories.
- 2. Make a healthy side dish.** Instead of bringing calorie laden potato salad, French fries, or chips to your barbecue, bring non-starchy vegetables or fruit as a side dish. A fresh summer salad with strawberries, feta cheese, and walnuts over mixed greens can be a perfect addition to any party. Or Bring a juicy watermelon and this will be sure to be a hit on a hot summer day. Another great idea is to fill up on vegetables first then you will have less room for the higher calorie foods. Lastly, if you cannot live without some potato salad, then enjoy just a few bites to keep your portion size in check.
- 3. Go easy on fried foods.** Fried chicken can often be a summer time favorite but it is filled with extra fat. Instead, grill skinless chicken breast on the grill or bake chicken in a crunchy coating such as corn flakes. If you love barbecue sauce on your chicken, then I'd suggest making your own instead of using the sugar rich store bought brand. The recipe is pretty easy and the flavor is always a hit when it's homemade!
- 4. Be cautious of dessert.** Ice cream can be a favorite past time on a hot summer afternoon but it's not the healthiest cool treat. Try to buy low fat and low sugar versions of ice cream to start. If you want to make it even

healthier you can make “ice cream” from frozen bananas, dark cocoa powder or fruit added for flavor, and a food processor. You could also pour a smoothie made with plain yogurt, fruit, and even some spinach into popsicle molds and freeze.

5. Be active! Run around the yard chasing kids, swim in the pool, or whatever activity you find fun. Don’t just sit in a lawn chair all day and eat! Summer can be a great time to enjoy the great outdoors so take advantage of this and be active outside. Even just an afternoon walk around the block is a start. And remember to step away from the food. If it’s in sight it is a lot more likely to wind up in your mouth even if you are full!

If you follow these easy tips, you are sure to enjoy your barbecue and enjoy your waist line as well!

The Evans Army Community Hospital Nutrition Care Division staff hosts monthly cooking classes and commissary tours to further help you stick to healthy eating all summer long. Call 526-7290 for more information.