

Katie Johnson: Good morning, and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness program, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I'm Katie Johnson, and my guest today is Virginia Nollmeyer, one of our registered dietitians at Lake Region Healthcare. Good morning, Virginia.

Virginia N.: Good morning, Katie.

Katie Johnson: Well, here we are, Fourth of July right around the corner. And Fourth of July brings to my mind picnics and eating outside. So, as we get outdoors and do grilling and picnicking, how do we still keep a good focus on nutrition, staying hydrated, and keeping our food safe? So, we're hoping you can give us some tips to help out with that.

Virginia N.: I think I can. One of the fun things that you can do when you're grilling instead of just having a regular burger and your chips, you can go ahead and do some kabobs. One of my friends did a really neat thing, they had the chicken on the kabob, they put on some vegetables, and they also added fruit like pineapple and apple to the skewers, and just barbecued that right up. And the apples came out really cool, they were fried but they had a little bit of seasoning on them, and the pineapple was delicious as well. So thinking about adding some extra vegetables to your diet that day or even fruit on the grill is really a cool way to go. You don't even have to skewer them, you can just set them on the grill if you want, wrap them up in some foil and you can just have them heated up. The apples turn out a little bit like an apple crisp when they're heated in the foil and they turn out really good, but there you're still getting your fruits and vegetables as well.

Katie Johnson: That sounds so fantastic. And, talk about something different, you know? You almost expect to get hotdogs and burgers when you go to a cookout, but what a great surprise to get something colorful and tasty and different.

Virginia N.: It's so true. You can even put squash on those skewers or just put squash right on the grill. You can do different colored peppers. You can do sweet potatoes. Anything that you normally have in your diet that you would cook in the house you can actually put right on the grill.

Katie Johnson: So, speaking of grilling, what are some of the common mistakes that people make when it comes to grilling and picnicking?

Virginia N.: Clean your grill.

Katie Johnson: What? You have to clean the grill? I thought that was one of the benefits of cooking outside.

Virginia N.: And that's what I thought as well, but apparently you have to clean your grill-

Katie Johnson: Okay.

Virginia N.: ... because I've made that mistake, and then you come out and there's all this crud on there that can be contaminated and also can have some of that charcoal-y black crud on your grill, you got to get rid of that. You got to clean your utensils that you used for grilling, your scrapers and everything, you should disinfect those in between each use. And also, you want to make sure that you check the temperature of your meats that you're doing, that's so important. That's one of the biggest mistakes, and if you aren't checking your hamburgers or your poultry that you have on the grill and making sure that that internal temperature is okay, it can actually be deadly.

Katie Johnson: What is your go-to source for what the right temperature is for meats when you're cooking them?

Virginia N.: You can actually go to ... The CDC has a great handout. And so for your hamburgers and for your poultry you want to make sure that your internal temperature, so have meat thermometer, is 165 degrees Fahrenheit just to make sure that everything is cooked good on the inside. Those are the two most important meat products that you want to make sure are cooked thoroughly. When you're looking at steaks or fish or whole cuts of meat, it needs to be about 160 degrees on the inside to 145 degrees, it just depends on the meat product. Your hotdogs, too, you would think you don't need to check the insides.

Katie Johnson: Yeah.

Virginia N.: But you should check those as well, and those should be about 160 degree Fahrenheit.

Katie Johnson: What about these organic hotdogs I've heard about? Is this a real thing, and are they really good or better for you than our traditional hotdogs?

Virginia N.: There are some hotdogs, and they're from Organic Prairie. There's other brands as well, I think Hormel is actually coming out with some. They are not processed, so they do not have the nitrates in them that can be dangerous if they're overcooked or anything like that. Cancer is a big risk factor with some of these processed hotdogs. So they don't have preservatives in them, there's no artificial flavors or artificial colorings, and they're not processed. So what that means is the shelf life isn't going to be as long as a processed hotdog, so you've got to make sure that you keep it cold, below 40 degrees Fahrenheit prior to grilling. So you've got to keep it cold the whole time, and then you want to make sure that you cook them thoroughly, so at 165 degrees Fahrenheit when you cook them since they do not have any chemicals that are there to keep them fresh and from getting some bacteria growth. But yes, I would suggest going that route. I haven't tried them myself, I've heard that they taste really

good because they are fresh, and they are coming in both the beef and the pork products.

Katie Johnson: So you can still have your hotdogs and be mindful of your health?

Virginia N.: Absolutely. Enjoy those hotdogs.

Katie Johnson: How about, how quickly does food go bad when it sits out in the summer heat, and what are some good tips for making sure we don't let that happen?

Virginia N.: Okay, the good tip starting right off the bat, is make sure you have a cooler with ice available. You want to stick the meats that you haven't cooked right now in that cooler. So take them from the fridge, put them in the cooler. They need to stay at a little bit below 40 degrees Fahrenheit prior to putting on the grill. After things are done cooking and you're done eating, if the temperature is warm outside, so say anywhere 75 to 80 degrees, you want to make sure that those go into a nice, cold space or cooler in about two hours. If the temperature is 90 degrees or above, make sure that they go in it after one hour.

Katie Johnson: And what about foods other than meats? What are the ... I mean obviously salads with mayonnaise are the one we know to look out for, are there some other things that aren't good to leave out any longer than that?

Virginia N.: I wouldn't ... We'll go back to your salads. I wouldn't put anything, just leave it sitting there. A lot of times we do the potato salad that's out there forever, those pasta salads that have sauces. Anything that has a sauce or a milky consistency to it can be a danger zone. You don't want to leave your tomatoes just sitting out, either. Just any of those products, anything that you might be like, "Huh, I wonder if this is okay," go ahead and put it in the cooler. And do it within that hour to two hours depending upon the temperature.

Katie Johnson: How about keeping our hands and surfaces clean outdoors when we don't have running water. What's your best advice for that?

Virginia N.: I am a big fan of baby wipes, so I actually have them in my car and I use them just to clean up. Sometimes I even ... You know, when you fill up with gas, you kind of wash your hands, too. So the same thing. But if you have baby wipes, or they have the Handi Wipes now that you can get in ... I think it's in the paper product aisle at your grocery store or at Walmart, and you can just have those in your car. Have them sitting by the grill as well so the person doing the grilling can wash between the raw meat and then the cooked products as well. Have them on the picnic tables or wherever people can see them so they can use those, and then make sure you just have a trash bag that they can put the used ones in. You can also get Clorox wipes, the disinfecting ones, which are really good to have around whoever's doing the cooking if they need to do a little cleanup, that way they're just not using a dry paper towel.

Katie Johnson: Good advice. Cross-contamination.

Virginia N.: Yes.

Katie Johnson: That's a big one with raw meat and other foods. How do we avoid that?

Virginia N.: All right, so you want to keep the raw meat that's on a platter or plate separate from the cooked meat. So, a lot of times I've seen people take that raw meat off that platter, they cook it, and then they plop it back on that platter again. You do not want to do that-

Katie Johnson: Yeah.

Virginia N.: ... because that kind of just defeats the purpose. So make sure you have a raw platter and then a cooked platter as well. Keep your meats before cooking, if you have them in a cooler like I suggested earlier to keep them cold, keep that separate from the food that's ready to eat. So you don't want that next to your potato salad, stored in the same area. Even in your refrigerator prior to doing your barbecue, you want to have your meats on the bottom shelf so they're not dripping and contaminating on some of your foods that are below.

Katie Johnson: Any other Fourth of July tips or just summer cooking tips or ideas you have to inspire us as we get ready for the holiday next week?

Virginia N.: Yeah, so mosquitoes are huge, so this is just a fun tip, okay? And I planted this on my balcony and it really does work. If you bring lemongrass, lavender, peppermints, or spearmint to your barbecue or wherever you're having it, sprinkle it out. You can have little trays of it on your table, you can make a floral arrangement with it, it will keep the mosquitoes and the wasps away from your food.

Katie Johnson: Seriously?

Virginia N.: Seriously. It works really well. The other thing you can get, they have little silicone covers that you can put over your pop or your glasses, and I think you can get those downtown at any of the stores. Walmart might have them as well, and it just keeps any bugs out of your beverages so you don't have that and they're cute and they're really decorative.

Katie Johnson: Oh, fun.

Virginia N.: Yes. The other thing you want to do is to make sure that you plan ahead. With everything you do there's always a planning process, so make sure you have your coolers ready to go for your raw food, your food for afterwards, and for your beverages that you want to keep cold. Make sure you have the ice there as well. Have the wet wipes ready to go for all your guests and for yourself, and then you want to make sure that you stay hydrated. So make sure there's lots of

water, lots of variety for your guests. You can have lemonade, you can have carbonated water, just make sure that you stay hydrated because sometimes in the heat, especially when we're outside having fun and we might be drinking some adult beverages as well, we can get dehydrated really, really fast.

Katie Johnson: I'm glad that you brought that up, I meant to bring up hydration. And one of the favorite things I've seen lately is all the great combinations of putting fresh fruits and vegetables infusing into water.

Virginia N.: Yes, absolutely. You can put cucumbers in there. You can put in strawberry slices, lemon slices, anything that your heart desires, and it really enhances the flavor of the water. And you can buy the infusers that just sit inside your pitcher, or I don't even use that, I just throw them in there and the cucumbers float on the top. The strawberries go to the bottom, but yeah, it's great.

Katie Johnson: So, having some fresh fruit in your water and bringing out these beautiful kabobs-

Virginia N.: Yes.

Katie Johnson: ... with fruit and vegetables, people are going to be so impressed with the picnic that you prepare, I can just tell.

Virginia N.: Absolutely. It'll be a good time, so have fun out there on the Fourth.

Katie Johnson: Thank you. Virginia Nollmeyer, registered dietitian, with some food, cooking, and safety tips for us as we prepare for the Fourth of July and our summer cooking her at the lakes in Minnesota. Virginia, thanks for sharing your time and great ideas with us.

Virginia N.: Thanks, Katie, and thanks, everyone.

Katie Johnson: Virginia and Katie reminding you there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.