



Doctors Warn About Using Wire-bristled Grill Brushes

Family barbecues will be taking place all across the state for Memorial Day weekend.

However, before cooking up some hot dogs and hamburgers, doctors are warning that the wire grills are being cleaned could be putting families in serious danger.

Those who clean their grills with a wire bristled brush could be taking a risk, as those bristles could end up in the food that is being cooked.

After eating a burger from the grill, Cheryl Harrison, of Wallingford, said she quickly knew something was wrong.

Within 48 hours she had severe pains and was rushed to the hospital.

"It was just a pain that I have never felt before," Harrison said. "I felt my stomach was bloated..."

extremely tender to the touch. You could not even push on anything—just hurt my stomach."

She had ingested a small, thin wire that became lodged in her intestine.

Her husband had cleaned the grill with a wire-bristled brush before cooking, and one of those bristles had fallen off and was inside of her burger.

"I have never heard of anything like this happening to anyone. I was totally shocked when it happened to me," Harrison said.

Two weeks ago, Harrison had emergency surgery at Midstate Medical Center.

Dr. Aziz Benbrahim said not only is this type of situation extremely dangerous, it isn't as rare as one might think.

"At that time it makes a hole in the intestine and that's really very life threatening," Benbrahim said. "We had a patient have it for two weeks and he had severe complications and a bigger surgery."

Last year, a young girl named Anna Dunn ingested a 1 inch piece of wire after eating a hot dog at a summer picnic.

She had surgery to remove it after it got lodged in her throat.

With a number of cases happening in Connecticut, Harrison said she wants to make sure no one has to go through what she did.

"I just think everyone should be aware because it's a very dangerous thing and it does happen to people," Harrison said.

Source: CNN

Root of Teen's Mystery Ailment: Tiny Wire from Barbecue Brush

At first, Tristin Beck thought it was a really bad stomach cramp. Then, when the aching turned to repeated vomiting late last week, the Mountlake Terrace 16-year-old thought it was a virus.

As the symptoms worsened, doctors at Seattle Children's hospital ran "about a million tests," Beck's mom said, searching for an explanation.

Finally, in a Sunday-night exploratory surgery, they found it: a tiny piece of grill brush wire, about the size of a short strand of hair, stuck inside Beck's small intestine.

Beck apparently accidentally ate the strand of wire during a barbecue nearly two weeks ago.

"Somehow one of the tiny little hairlike wires got stuck in one of the grills in the barbecue and in a one-in-a-million chance it got stuck in a piece of chicken that I ate and made it most of the way through my body but then got stuck in my intestines and basically started stabbing me from the inside out," Beck said Wednesday from his hospital bed.

Beck, who is expected to make a full recovery, is the latest case of a little-known safety hazard that experts say is more common than most people think.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety

Commission say they don't have any data on so-called "bristle-brush incidents," when a piece of wire from a grill brush makes it into food and then a body, puncturing the throat, intestines or elsewhere in the digestive tract.

Dr. David Grand, a radiologist at Rhode Island Hospital, said such incidents are life-threatening and taking place across the country.

Grand is the author of a paper published in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Report last summer about a half-dozen cases in Rhode Island over a two-year period.

He said the incidents are mistakenly thought to be rarer than they really are because many times the doctor removes a piece of wire without realizing it came from a grill brush.

At least one confirmed case occurred in Washington last July, when Tacoma's Adam Wojtanowicz underwent emergency surgery because of a brush bristle.

Beck's ordeal began after a barbecue on Saturday, April 27, when he had some chicken.

On May 1, the following Wednesday, the Inglemoor High sophomore started feeling abdominal pain in the middle of the school day.

When he got home, Beck started vomiting repeatedly. Sometimes the vomit was tinged with blood. Beck's parents took him to the hospital on Friday.

The doctors couldn't figure out the problem and initially wanted to send Beck home, he said.

Then they started tests, speculating it could be anything from a birth defect to a brain tumor. They eventually located a "bowel obstruction" and decided to perform the surgery.

Surgeons found the piece of wire in an hourlong surgery Sunday night.

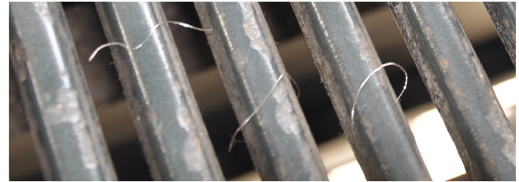
"We were very scared, we were very freaked out," said Beck's mother, Beth. "He could have died."

Beth Beck, a bank officer, said she hopes her family's story persuades people to throw out their wire grill brushes.

Tristin Beck said he will find a new way to clean the grill and will barbecue again.

"But not for a while," he said.

Source: Seattle Times



BBQ Danger: Wires From Grill Cleaners Swallowed in Food

Several Rhode Island residents had a brush with the emergency room because of sharp wire bristles that made their way from barbecue grills into their digestive tracts.

The wire bristles, which came from the metallic brushes used to clean grills, apparently ended up in barbecued beef or chicken that the patients ate, a new report said. From there, the bristles went to their throats and stomachs and caused serious medical issues.

Emergency physicians elsewhere said they'd never seen this happen. So might the nation's smallest state be the home to its biggest problem with renegade grill-cleaner bristles? Report lead author Dr. David Grand isn't so sure.

"Certainly, we all love to grill, though I can't say for certain that Rhode Islanders grill anymore than other Americans. More likely, once we became aware of this problem we began looking for it, and if we don't specifically look for this we will not find it," said Grand, a radiologist at Rhode Island Hospital in Providence.

Within an 18-month period from 2009 to 2010, six patients appeared at the hospital with symptoms of abdominal pain or painful swallowing. The patients—aged 11 to 75 and including five females—didn't know the cause, although they'd all eaten grilled meats within the last two to 24 hours.

Scans or x-rays revealed metallic bristles in their necks or lower in their digestive systems. The bristles caused serious problems in some cases; for instance, a bristle perforated the stomach and liver of one patient who had to stay in the hospital for six days.

"Treatment for these patients involves removal of the wire," Grand said. "If the wire is lodged in the mouth or throat, this may be accomplished by an

ear, nose and throat doctor or gastroenterologist who can use a small scope to find and remove the wire. If, however, the wire has perforated the intestine at the time of presentation, surgery with removal of the affected bowel segment will usually be required."

In each case, the patients had eaten food grilled on a barbecue that had been cleaned just before cooking. It seems that the bristles fell off the brushes, landed on the grill and ended up in the food. "All of the patients in our [group] ate meat—either beef or chicken," Grand said. "It is unclear if they simply were not grilling their vegetables, weren't eating vegetables or if the bristles don't stick as easily to vegetables placed on the grill."

Emergency physicians said they're familiar with a variety of ingested foreign objects in patients, but not this particular one. Toothpicks may be the closest thing, said Dr. Michael Lanigan, an attending physician in emergency medicine at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in New York City. Sharp objects, he said, can cause perforations anywhere in the digestive tract.

What should you do to prevent bristles from getting into your food when you grill?

"When my pop had a charcoal grill, he'd do a good rinse to get off the residue," Lanigan said. You can rinse the cooking grates in the sink or with a hose "and make sure you didn't leave anything on there," he said.

Grand, the report author, has his own cleaning method. "Anecdotally, although I have no scientific proof that this works, I now wipe my grill with a wet paper towel after using a brush, hoping to remove any dislodged bristles," said Grand.

Source: HealthDay News

A Growing Danger in Grilling Season

Cleaning up the grill for summer barbecue season could have serious hidden health dangers.

This week, a woman in Connecticut needed emergency surgery to remove a wire barbecue brush bristle from her digestive tract—and doctors say she's not the first. Cheryl Harrison of Wallingford, Connecticut, was rushed to the hospital by her husband after feeling a sharp and unusual pain in her stomach.

That pain was caused by a single stray bristle that had fallen off the metal grill cleaning brush had found its way into the hamburger she ate. She came into the emergency room within a day because of severe abdominal pain. After a CT scan showed the wire, doctors were able to remove it from her stomach through laparoscopic surgery.

Dr. Aziz Benbrahim, her general surgeon at Midstate Medical Center, told CBS News she was lucky because she came in right away. A previous patient of his who had a grill brush wire stuck in his system waited for a couple of weeks. It had punctured his intestine.

"I had to open him up completely," said Benbrahim. "Then we remove this wire and we found out also why he had chest pain—because he also had pulmonary embolism, which is a blood clot in his lungs."

"He was just lucky he was still alive," he added. "All from this wire."

Just one of the coarse wire bristles can puncture any part of the digestive system—esophagus, intestines or stomach—as it makes its way down the tract. The consequences can range from sharp pains to major punctures that could cause death.

The CDC says approximately 80,000 people come to emergency rooms every year after accidentally swallowing foreign objects—the majority are children. Wire bristles from grill cleaning brushes are part of that group, but one of the hardest to

detect because the bristles are so thin they don't always show up on X-rays. No data is officially collected on these cases.

"Nobody knows the statistics, that's the problem. The only paper published talks about 6 or 7 cases and I believe it's a much, much more common," Benbrahim said. "When I was talking to my colleagues at the hospital, I was surprised that all of them had at least one or two patients like this. I didn't think it was that common. And this isn't a very big hospital, so I assume that in a bigger hospital they would have more."

The one definitive study was conducted at the Rhode Island Hospital in Providence in 2010, after the hospital surgically removed wire bristles from six patients within an 18-month period; it was updated in 2012.

In these six cases, the hospital only determined that wires were causing the painful swallowing or abdominal pain through careful questions about what and when the patients ate and either x-rays or CT scans. The bristles had perforated the small intestines of two patients and the stomach and liver of another.

For people who have unidentified abdominal pain, seeking medical attention quickly to find the source of the problem—and telling doctors all the specifics of eating habits since the pain began—can make a big difference in faster diagnosis and treatment.

"Anyone who has abdominal pain which does not go away the next day or so, if it's severe, should not dismiss it," said Benbrahim.

As a precaution, grills can be cleaned with aluminum foil or nylon brushes, instead of wire brushes, then wiped down with a cloth and carefully inspected before food is cooked.

Source: CBS

BBQ Bristle Lodged in Toronto Woman's Throat

A Toronto woman is sharing her own brush with disaster following a similar incident recently in Alberta. Tania Di Mauro said that she spent 10 days in intensive care last November after being admitted to Sunnybrook hospital for emergency throat surgery, for what was ultimately determined to be a metal bristle from a barbecue brush that lodged in her throat.

The incident has caused Di Mauro, 45, excessive nerve pain resulting in a months-long leave of absence from her job as an early childhood educator with the Toronto District Catholic School Board. Di Mauro decided to share her story with the

Toronto Sun after reading about a similar situation in Red Deer where Kim Schellenberg underwent two throat surgeries and spent a week in hospital after swallowing a metal bristle that ended up on a hamburger.

Di Mauro said she was sitting down to a steak dinner with family on Nov. 6, after which she noticed a "spearing" sensation in her throat. "I thought it was a piece of meat at first," Di Mauro recalled. "Then I started throwing up and my nose began to bleed."

ER doctors were baffled when they didn't see anything in the initial scans. She said that she was then sent home but returned to hospital soon after when her condition worsened. "I couldn't speak or turn my head," Di Mauro recalled. "I went back to the hospital and that's when they did another scan and saw the metallic bit in my throat."

Despite their efforts and hours of surgery, doctors were unable to remove the bristle and instead opted for an emergency tracheotomy to help Di Mauro breathe. She remained in hospital for 10 days.

The bristle has since split into three pieces—one continues to work its way through her mouth while two pieces have become lodged in the base of her tongue. Her doctor said that while the two pieces in her tongue are likely there to stay, the third piece will be removed once it travels to a more accessible place for surgeons to extract it.

The brush that affected Schellenberger was from a discount store but Di Mauro describes her brush a higher-end variety. Many barbecue brushes carry disclaimers on their labels, warning buyers to inspect the brush regularly and to replace it if the bristles become loose.

Di Mauro said that while she still enjoys barbecue, she now cuts steak into very small pieces and is leery of eating at restaurants. The family now also uses a cleaning stone instead of a brush to scrape off the grill and Di Mauro is quick to tell anyone her story if it will prevent someone else from enduring such an ordeal.

"Having heard this latest story has motivated me to speak," said Di Mauro. "I'm lucky—it just missed my vocal cords. I'm here talking about it, so that's the good thing."

Source: Toronto Sun