



## food matters

with Consultant Nutritionist Sue Radd

### summer BBQs: what's at steak?

Everyone loves summer; many people like to enjoy a meal prepared out of doors. But throwing a steak on the barbie (and eating it) may be harmful to your health. New research confirms suspicions of longer-term consumption: a high intake of red meat and/or processed meats will significantly increase the risk of colorectal cancer. And barbecuing meat at high temperatures on an open flame is particularly bad because it causes the formation of carcinogens.

Preliminary results from the European Prospective Investigation Into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC) show that eating processed meats (ham, bacon, sausage, cured or smoked luncheon meat, salami etc) increases the risk of colorectal cancer by 175 per cent. This is an ongoing study, involving around 500,000 people from nine European countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom).

The largest Australian study on food and cancer echoes these findings. The Melbourne Collaborative Cohort Study of 38,000 Victorians found that bowel cancer risk is increased by 150 per cent in people eating red meat seven times per week; this level of risk doesn't drop until consumption levels of red meat are below three or four times per week.

Australians and New Zealanders have high intakes of red meat relative to other countries and, as you might expect, have among the highest rates of colon cancer.

So what do you throw on the barbie? Begin by eating cancer-protective foods—the colourful veges such as zucchini, baby squash, Spanish onions, mushrooms, corn and eggplant drizzled with a bit of olive oil for flavour. Soy-based sausages and burgers are also tasty.

Avoid or limit risky foods. The World Cancer Research Fund does not recommend red meat, but advises less than 80 grams (size of packet of cigarettes) daily for those people who choose to eat it, and a preference for fish and poultry.

See **page 48** for some delicious meatless BBQ alternative recipes.