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## Eggs

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### Summary

- Eggs are a nutritious, tasty and easy food for you and your family.
  - There are lots of egg recipes and ideas that you can use every day.
  - Handle eggs with care. And be careful when preparing and eating foods that contain raw eggs.
  - Egg allergies can affect young children, but most grow out of their allergy.
  - For most people, the benefits of eating eggs outweigh the risks.
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The humble egg is a powerhouse of nutritional goodness.

Eggs are full of things your body needs. They are a great source of protein, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals (such as vitamin A, vitamin D, vitamin E, folic acid and iron). In fact, eggs are one of the few foods that naturally contain vitamin D. Eggs are good for your brain. Egg yolks contain choline, an important nutrient that helps brain development. And choline is also good for brain plasticity, which may help protect you from memory loss and other signs of cognitive decline as you get older.

Eggs are also a great energy source. A large egg (around 60 grams) provides around 300 kilojoules.

And if you're wondering if you should eat the yolk, the answer is yes. The white contains most of the egg's protein, and most of the magnesium, potassium, riboflavin and niacin found in eggs. But, all of the vitamin A, D, and E is in the yolk, as well as essential fatty acids. And so is most of the energy. So opt for an omelette with the yolks in!

### Knowing how many eggs to eat

Eggs are an essential part of a healthy, balanced diet. The [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#) include eggs in the 'lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legume/beans' group as a meat alternative.

A serve of eggs is two large eggs (around 60 g each), and the guidelines recommend that you eat 1–3 serves of protein rich foods from this group every day.

According to the [Dietary Guidelines](#) (p. 51), most recent evidence suggests there are no health risks associated with eating eggs. People once thought that because eggs naturally contain cholesterol, eating them may lead to high blood cholesterol levels. There is now good evidence to show that there is no link between eating foods with cholesterol, and the risk of high cholesterol or heart disease.

The Dietary Guidelines have also reported no association between eating eggs each day, and the risk of heart disease.

### Healthy ways to cook eggs

Are there eggs in your fridge? If the answer is yes then you are not far away from a nutritious and tasty meal.

- Eggs are the perfect way to start the day. Boil an egg and squash it onto a piece of toast with avocado. Delicious!
  - For a healthy lunch, it's hard to go past a fresh tuna salad. Just empty your favourite can of tuna into a bowl with some tomatoes, avocado, cucumber and a boiled egg. Top with some pumpkin seeds, a drizzle of olive oil, some lemon juice and some freshly ground black pepper. Lunch is served!
  - Scrambled egg is a fantastic and fast finger food for toddlers.
  - Eggs are comfort food at its best. A soft-boiled egg with buttery fingers of toast is perfect for Sunday night dinner.
  - Eggs are versatile and can be used in many sweet or savoury dishes. Quiches, frittatas, zucchini slice, custard and pavlova are just a few ideas.
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## Handle eggs with care

So, we know eggs are good for us, but we do need to be careful about how we handle and cook them. Food containing raw or minimally cooked eggs can contain **salmonella**. But you can minimise this risk by following these safety tips when handling and cooking eggs.

- Vulnerable people (small children, pregnant women, older people and people with compromised immune systems) should not eat food containing raw eggs. Common examples include eggnog, uncooked desserts such as chocolate mousse and tiramisu, hollandaise sauce, fresh mayonnaise, aioli, health shakes with an added egg and steak tartare.
- If you are preparing any foods that contain raw eggs, try to do it as close to serving time as possible. And then keep the food in the fridge until you are ready to eat.
- Have a good look at your eggs before using them. If they are cracked, throw them in the bin.
- Store your eggs in the fridge in the cardboard carton you buy them in. Leaving them in their carton can help stop your eggs cracking when you move them and it also helps to prevent them taking on the smell of other foods in your fridge.
- If you have your own hens, collect the eggs each day. Look carefully for any cracks and use a dry cloth or paper towel to wipe off any visible dirt.

## Keeping Backyard Chickens – What you should know

Keeping chickens as pets, can be a rewarding experience, especially for children. However, chickens and other poultry can carry germs such as Salmonella, even when they appear healthy and clean. These germs are found in the chickens' faeces (poo) which can then contaminate the feathers of the chickens, the environment they live in and have access to, and the outside surfaces of the eggs that they lay.

Following these few simple steps can help to make sure that keeping chickens is a positive experience and reduce the chances of you or your family from becoming sick.

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water as soon as possible after touching chickens; collecting eggs; handling nesting material; contact with chicken litter/manure or any of the environment that the chickens live in.
- Adults should supervise handwashing for young children.
- Supervise young children closely when they are around chickens to make sure they do not cuddle or kiss the chickens, let them touch their face, or put unwashed hands in their mouths.
- Don't eat or drink around live poultry and make sure hands are washed thoroughly prior to eating.
- Have a dedicated pair of shoes or boots to wear inside the chicken enclosure and don't wear these shoes or boots inside your house. Clean and disinfect these shoes or boots regularly.
- Wear gloves when you are cleaning out the chicken enclosure and when you are handling any nesting material which might be contaminated with chicken manure.

## Eggs and pregnancy

There is no reason to stop eating eggs while you're pregnant. Just make sure they are cooked. This means avoiding foods that contain raw eggs, such as homemade mayonnaise, aioli, chocolate mousse, and cake and pancake batter. You can keep eating boiled or poached eggs throughout your pregnancy, just cook them until the yolks are firm. And make sure that the eggs you are cooking are not cracked or dirty.

## Eggs and young children

Eggs are a fantastic food for kids. Packed full of good things and quick to prepare, eggs will get you out of trouble when you have a hungry child! **Infant Feeding Guidelines** recommend that you introduce solid foods to your child at around six months. Parents are sometimes worried about offering their baby eggs for the first time, as they are a common allergen, but it's best to offer your infant cooked eggs regularly, before they reach 12 months of age.

Introduce eggs in small amounts, such as by mixing in small amounts of cooked eggs into other foods (like vegetables puree). It's also best to offer egg in the morning, **so you can watch and easily act on any reactions.**

Egg allergy symptoms will usually appear in the minutes and hours after eating eggs or food containing eggs. The symptoms of an egg allergy include:

- skin rashes
- hives
- nasal congestion
- vomiting or other digestive problems.

If you think your child has had a reaction to eggs, talk to your doctor. The good news is that most kids grow out of their egg allergy.

In very rare circumstances, an egg allergy can cause **anaphylaxis** (a life-threatening condition). **If you think your child is showing symptoms of anaphylaxis (difficulty breathing, pale and floppy, swollen tongue), dial 000 for an ambulance immediately.**

### **Eggs and vaccines**

Some vaccines contain egg proteins. In Australia, the only vaccines that may contain traces of egg protein are those for influenza, yellow fever and Q fever.

If you have an egg allergy, it is important that you let your doctor or nurse know before your vaccination. Even though there is a very low risk of an adverse reaction, you may need to be vaccinated under the supervision of a specialist allergy or immunology doctor.

### **So many choices**

Which eggs should you buy? Good question. It is easy to get overwhelmed in the egg section of the supermarket. Caged, cage-free, free range, organic, omega-3 – there are lots of different claims.

Many of the claims relate to the way the chickens are farmed or housed. Free range eggs are laid by a chicken that is not closely confined and has some access to outdoor spaces. Cage-free eggs are also called barn laid eggs – the chickens are free to roam in large barns, but they do not have access to outdoor spaces. Caged eggs, on the other hand, are laid by chickens that are confined in a cage. They do not have a nest or perch and do not go outside.

The good news is that new laws are on their way, making sure that free range eggs really are free range (that is, they meet a minimum standard of 10,000 chickens per hectare). The bad news is that many (including **Choice**) think this is not good enough. So watch this space.

Another option is to buy your eggs from local producers. Lots of farmers markets and local shops sell eggs from local farmers.

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Dietitians Association of Australia

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