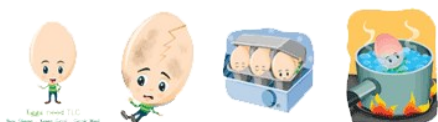

Food safety - eggs

Summary

- Buy clean – check eggs are clean and uncracked before purchasing.
 - Keep cool – store eggs in the fridge in their cartons.
 - Cook well – cook eggs until they are hot all the way through, especially when serving to pregnant women, young children, elderly people and anyone with an impaired immune system.
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Eggs are a nutritional powerhouse. They provide the body with 13 vitamins and minerals, high-quality protein and important antioxidants. Eggs are also tasty, convenient and good value for money, making them an excellent inclusion in a well-balanced diet.

Food safety is as important with eggs as it is with chicken, meat, seafood and dairy products. There can be health risks if eggs are not handled, stored and prepared safely.

Some eggs may be contaminated with bacteria, which can cause serious food poisoning (diarrhoea and vomiting). Be careful with raw eggs and avoid food containing raw eggs, including homemade mayonnaise, raw cake mix and biscuit dough, and milkshakes.

To enjoy eggs safely, buy clean, uncracked eggs that are within their 'best before' date, store them in the fridge in their carton and cook until hot all the way through. If you follow these basic food safety tips, you can significantly reduce the chances of you or your family becoming ill from bacteria in or on eggs.

Avoid cracked and dirty eggs

Bacteria from dirt or chicken droppings on the outside of the shell can enter the egg through cracks that are sometimes too fine to see. Once inside the egg, bacteria can grow, increasing the risk of illness.

When purchasing eggs, you can take a number of steps to keep food safe:

- Open the carton and check the eggs look clean and are not cracked before purchasing.
- Don't buy 'self-serve' eggs (where you select individual eggs from a bulk display). You won't know where the eggs are from, how they have been stored and handled, or their 'best before' date.
- Consider that larger eggs have thinner shells and are more likely to crack and let in bacteria.
- If you find a dirty or cracked egg, throw it out.
- Don't wash eggs as the shell becomes more porous when wet, making it easier for bacteria to get in.

The best way to store eggs is to keep them in their own carton in the fridge:

- The 'best before' date on the carton assumes you are storing your eggs in the fridge. If you do not store your eggs in the fridge, you will need to use them much sooner than the 'best before' date on the carton.
- Egg shells are porous and can become tainted by strong-smelling foods in your fridge. Keeping them in the carton makes this less likely to happen.
- Usually the 'best before' date is on the carton – if you take the eggs out of the carton, you won't know when the date has passed.

Take the same precautions with eggs as for meat or dairy

Take the same precautions with eggs as you would with chicken, meat, seafood or dairy products:

- Buy and use eggs before the 'best before' date.
- Thoroughly clean your hands, food areas, work surfaces, dishes, cleaning cloths and utensils after working with eggs and especially after egg spills.
- Serve hot dishes containing eggs straight away or cool them quickly in the fridge and keep them refrigerated until they are eaten.

Cook eggs until they are hot all the way through

Cook eggs and foods containing eggs until they are hot all the way through:

- Cooking eggs thoroughly kills bacteria, but bacteria can survive if food is not cooked until it's hot all the way through.
- The more thoroughly cooked the egg, the less likely bacteria can survive.
- Foods containing eggs that are thoroughly cooked are generally safe. These include cakes, firm quiches and biscuits.

Avoid uncooked food that contains raw eggs

Homemade foods containing uncooked (raw), or lightly cooked eggs are often linked to food poisoning.

Common examples of these foods include:

- homemade mayonnaise, egg butter and salad dressings
- béarnaise and hollandaise sauces
- milkshakes with raw egg
- homemade ice-cream
- mousses, custards and tiramisu
- uncooked pancake batter, cake mix, pastry or biscuit dough.

Commercially available versions of these foods (that you buy 'off the shelf') are generally safe, as they will almost certainly have been produced using pasteurised egg or will have been heat treated. To check, read the label or get in touch with the manufacturer.

Consider alternatives for vulnerable people

Food-related illnesses can affect anyone, but are more common in children under five and young adults. The symptoms are often worse in pregnant women, the elderly and people with impaired immune systems.

- Consider alternative recipes for uncooked foods that would usually contain raw eggs.
- Consider using pasteurised egg products instead of shell eggs – ask about pasteurised egg at your supermarket.

Where to get help

- **Food Safety Hotline.** Tel. 1300 364 352
- Your local council environmental health officer. Find your council's contact details at '[Find a Council](#)'

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Department of Health and Human Services - RHP&R - Health Protection - Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit

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