

LEAPS

learning eating active play sleep

Egg Safety



How do I keep eggs safe?

Eggs are a nutritious food. However, eggs can be contaminated with harmful bacteria such as *Salmonella*. *Salmonella* can contaminate eggs at any stage - from laying, packing, transporting and storage, to use in the kitchen. Bacteria can be spread easily from eggs to other foods, hands, work surfaces and utensils so need to be handled correctly to avoid the risks of food poisoning.

Cracked or dirty eggs have been associated with many cases of *Salmonella* infection (salmonellosis) and should not be used.

Salmonellosis can also be caused by eating raw or partially-cooked eggs. Young children, pregnant women, the elderly and anyone who is in poor health should avoid eating foods containing raw or partially cooked eggs. Examples of such foods are home-made mayonnaise, custard, cheesecake, eggnog and mousse.

Keeping your own chickens

If you keep your own chickens:

- Collect the eggs at least twice a day, especially in warmer weather to reduce the risk of *Salmonella* growing
- Throw away any eggs that are dirty, cracked or broken and any eggs which may have lain in a hidden nest for some time
- Store eggs in clean containers in the refrigerator
- Always use the oldest eggs first

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has information on housing, feeding and managing small flocks of chickens available from their website at <http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/animal-industries/poultry/small-scale-poultry-keeping>

Handling eggs

Always ensure you thoroughly wash your hands after handling eggs particularly if they are cracked or dirty. This is to avoid contaminating other foods with *Salmonella*.

Do not try to clean dirty eggs by washing the eggs. Egg shells become more porous when wet, which makes it easier for any bacteria from dirt, feathers or faeces that may be on the shell, to get inside the egg.

The only safe way to deal with dirty or cracked eggs is to throw them out.

Keep raw eggs away from other food. Surfaces which have been in contact with raw eggs, as well as the utensils used for their preparation, should be thoroughly washed and dried.

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Cooking eggs

Avoid eating raw eggs and uncooked or partially cooked foods made with raw eggs.

Salmonella are killed by cooking, but illness can occur if eggs are added to a food that will not be cooked or are only partially cooked such as mayonnaise, hollandaise, béarnaise and aioli sauces, ice cream, eggnog, cheesecake, mousse and meringue, particularly if they are home-made.

These foods should be consumed immediately after preparation. Any leftovers should be refrigerated and consumed within 24 hours. Do not store food containing raw or lightly cooked egg at room temperature.

If you are cooking a dish containing eggs ensure that the eggs are cooked until the yolk and white are firm.

Serve hot dishes containing eggs straight away. If the meal is not going to be eaten straight away, cool it quickly in the fridge and reheat later on. When reheating cooked food containing eggs, ensure that the food is reheated thoroughly to piping hot.

Purchasing eggs

Don't buy or use eggs that are broken, cracked or dirty. This includes eggs that are sold at road-side stalls or given to you by a neighbour or friend.

Broken, cracked or dirty eggs are more likely to contain bacteria (*Salmonella*) on the outside and the inside of the egg because:

- Dirty eggs (with faeces and feathers) are a perfect environment for bacteria
- If an egg shell is cracked (including fine hairline cracks), bacteria can easily enter and grow inside the egg
- When purchasing eggs:
 - Check that the eggs are clean and free from visible dirt or feathers and that the shells are not broken or cracked
 - Check that the name and address of the egg producer is on the carton or packaging as well as the production date or best before date
 - Check that the eggs are individually stamped with the producers unique identification

Storing eggs

It is important to use eggs before the recommended date shown on the outside of the carton or packaging.

It is recommended that eggs are stored in the refrigerator in their carton or other egg container. This extends the life of the egg and minimises the risk of *Salmonella* growing. This also protects the eggs from damage and absorbing odours from other food.