



PLAYING IT SAFE WITH EGGS

To avoid the possibility of foodborne illness, fresh eggs must be handled carefully. Even eggs with clean, uncracked shells may occasionally contain bacteria called *Salmonella* that can cause an intestinal infection. The most effective way to prevent egg-related illness is by knowing how to buy, store, handle and cook eggs—or foods that contain them—safely. That is why the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires all cartons of shell eggs that have not been treated to destroy *Salmonella* must carry the following safe handling statement:

Safe Handling Instructions: To prevent illness from bacteria: keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly.¹

Following these instructions is important for everyone but especially for those most vulnerable to foodborne disease—children, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems due to steroid use, conditions such as AIDS, cancer or diabetes, or such treatments as chemotherapy for cancer or immune suppression because of organ transplants.

Eggs that have been treated to destroy *Salmonella*—by in-shell pasteurization, for example—are not required to carry safe handling instructions.

Buy Right

- Buy eggs only if sold from a refrigerator or refrigerated case.²
- Open the carton and make sure that the eggs are clean and the shells are not cracked.
- **Refrigerate promptly.**
- Store eggs in their original carton and use them within 3 weeks for best quality.



Keep Everything Clean

Before preparing any food, remember that cleanliness is key!

- Wash hands, utensils, equipment, and work surfaces with hot, soapy water before and after they come in contact with eggs and egg-containing foods

Cook Thoroughly

Thorough cooking is perhaps the most important step in making sure eggs are safe.

- **Cook eggs until both the yolk and the white are firm. Scrambled eggs should not be runny.**
- **Casseroles and other dishes containing eggs should be cooked to 160°F (72°C). Use a food thermometer to be sure.**
- For recipes that call for eggs that are raw or undercooked when the dish is served—Caesar salad dressing and homemade ice cream are two examples—use either shell eggs that have been treated to destroy *Salmonella*, by pasteurization or another approved method, or pasteurized egg products. Treated shell eggs are available from a growing number of retailers and are clearly labeled, while pasteurized egg products are widely available.



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Serve Safely

Bacteria can multiply in temperatures from 40°F (5°C) to 140°F (60°C), so it's very important to serve foods safely.

- Serve cooked eggs and egg-containing foods immediately after cooking.
- For buffet-style serving, hot egg dishes should be kept hot, and cold egg dishes kept cold.
- Eggs and egg dishes, such as quiches or soufflés, may be refrigerated for serving later but should be thoroughly reheated to 165°F (74°C) before serving.

Chill Properly

- Cooked eggs, including hard-boiled eggs, and egg-containing foods should not sit out for more than 2 hours. Within 2 hours either reheat or refrigerate.
- Use hard-cooked eggs (in the shell or peeled) within 1 week after cooking
- Use frozen eggs within one year. Eggs should not be frozen in their shells. To freeze whole eggs, beat yolks and whites together. Egg whites can also be frozen by themselves.
- Refrigerate leftover cooked egg dishes and use within 3-4 days. When refrigerating a large amount of a hot egg-containing leftover, divide it into several shallow containers so it will cool quickly.



On the Road

- Cooked eggs for a picnic should be packed in an insulated cooler with enough ice or frozen gel packs to keep them cold.
 - Don't put the cooler in the trunk—carry it in the air-conditioned passenger compartment of the car.
- If taking cooked eggs to work or school, pack them with a small frozen gel pack or a frozen juice box.

¹The Safe Handling Statement must appear on all cartons of untreated shell eggs by September 2001.

²FDA also requires that, by June 2001, untreated shell eggs sold at stores, roadside stands, etc., must be stored and displayed under refrigeration at 45°F (7°C).

For More Information, Contact:

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline

1 (800) 535-4555 or (202) 720-3333 (Washington, DC)

TTY: 1 (800) 256-7072

www.fsis.usda.gov

FDA Food Information Line

1 (888) SAFEFOOD

www.cfsan.fda.gov