

# Safe use of eggs

## Why eat eggs?

Eggs make a nutritious and cheap contribution to the diet of many Australians. To enjoy them safely, it is important to buy clean, good quality eggs. Cracked eggs or eggs that are very dirty or incorrectly stored or prepared can make you sick.

## Buying eggs

When buying eggs, always:

- buy eggs in cartons that show the name of the supplier and the 'best before' date;
- check the eggs are clean, free from visible dirt and feathers, and the shells have no visible cracks; and
- make sure the eggs have not been stored in sunlight.
- Make sure you buy good quality, clean eggs.

## Storing eggs

Make sure you always wash your hands before and after handling eggs. When you put the eggs away, you should:

- store them in the refrigerator in their own carton, or in a special container for eggs away from other food; and
- check the temperature in your refrigerator is 5°C or below.

## How to prepare and cook eggs

- When you prepare food:
- always wash your hands before and after handling eggs;
- avoid using cracked or dirty eggs, even if you plan to cook them thoroughly;
- refrigerate cooked egg which is not eaten immediately;
- take care when making foods with raw eggs, such as eggnog, egg flips and homemade mayonnaise,

because bacteria on the egg shells can contaminate the food. If you do make these products, ensure you make fresh batches daily and store them in the refrigerator at 5°C or below; and

- avoid giving foods made with raw eggs to pregnant women, young children, elderly people and anyone with an illness. Thoroughly cook all foods using eggs that will be served to these people.

## Why is it important to handle eggs safely?

If eggs are not handled correctly, bacteria (eg. *Salmonella*) can grow, causing sickness. *Salmonella* can also be transmitted to other products from eggs.

For example, in December 2005, Tasmanian authorities reported an outbreak of gastroenteritis caused by *Salmonella*. The source of the outbreak was traced back to foods containing raw egg, such as mayonnaise, tartare and hollandaise sauces, and food that had been cross-contaminated from dirty eggs.

Careful handling ensures that eggs do not develop cracks for the *Salmonella* bacteria to enter. Also, cooking eggs (so they are not runny) kills any *Salmonella* bacteria that may be present.

## For more information

The NSW Food Authority is the NSW government agency responsible for regulating food production and food safety throughout the state.

The NSW Food Authority has other consumer fact sheets on its website [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au), including one on *Salmonella*.

These are also available through the Authority's Consumer and Industry Contact Centre on 1300 552 406.