

Gloucester City Council

Environmental Health Factsheet

EGGS - HOW SAFE?

Food poisoning is still on the increase! Record levels have been reported every year since 1986. Salmonella bacteria, which are the commonest cause of food poisoning in the UK, are frequently found in poultry flocks. There are hundreds of different types of Salmonella and one - Salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 - has been responsible for much of the increase in food poisoning over the last few years.

Salmonella from eggs has caused outbreaks of food poisoning and may be responsible for many single cases. However only a few of the vast number of eggs eaten each year are thought to be contaminated. Measures have been taken to reduce Salmonella in poultry flocks but the problem still continues.

What About Food I Buy?

Caterers have been warned of the dangers of serving dishes containing raw egg; food manufacturers use pasteurised egg in their products. Food from shops and restaurants should therefore be safe to eat.

Using Eggs At Home

Any fully cooked food which contains egg will be safe. **Eating raw egg in any form is not recommended.** The Government's Chief Medical Officer will say when this advice can be withdrawn. **HE HAS NOT YET DONE THIS.**

Any food which includes uncooked or only very lightly cooked eggs may also have Salmonella bacteria present and could cause illness.

Problem Dishes may include some recipes for:-

egg nog;
mayonnaise;
hollandaise sauce;
mousse;
binder for sandwich fillings;

ice cream;
cheesecake;
lightened whipped cream;
rich marzipan;
royal icing.



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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Salmonella bacteria cannot be seen or smelled and will grow rapidly at room temperature in most of these foods. Tests have shown that they can survive in icing and marzipan.

What Can I Do?

- Change your recipes to **EXCLUDE raw egg**
- Use egg white substitutes such as 'Merrywhite', most easily found in Health Food Shops
- Follow the guidelines set out at the end of this factsheet.

Special Care

Food poisoning is unpleasant. Bad cases can cause dehydration which can be dangerous to the very young, the sick, the elderly or pregnant women. These groups should take special care to avoid **all** risk of food poisoning including the consumption of partly cooked eggs.

One group of people who are at particular risk are body builders and weight trainers who sometimes take quite large amounts of **RAW EGG** in their diet. This can lead to **FOOD POISONING** and rapid loss of weight. Several have been ill for long periods. There is no nutritional benefit from eating raw egg; cooked eggs or low fat milk will give the same nutritional effect. A carbohydrate-enhanced diet may, in fact, be better than high protein intake.

For these groups there may also be some risk from eating lightly cooked egg products such as:

*meringue;
omelettes and scrambled egg;
soft boiled eggs or
eggs fried on one side only.*

Cooking kills food poisoning bacteria. If egg is cooked until it is firm and dry, any bacteria present in the raw state will be destroyed.

Guidelines

- Refrigerate eggs
- Rotate stock
- Wash your hands after handling eggs
- Do not use cracked eggs
- Clean as you go - worktop surfaces, utensils and containers
- Eat egg dishes soon after preparation or refrigerate them quickly

For further advice about preventing **FOOD POISONING** in your family ask for a copy of FoodSense booklet '**FOOD SAFETY**'