

Understanding Eggs and Cholesterol



In the past, healthcare professionals have recommended restricting the number of eggs in the diet because they contain cholesterol. However, scientific understanding of the relationship between dietary cholesterol and blood cholesterol has evolved significantly.



WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?

There are two main types of cholesterol:

- ✗ **LDL (“bad”) cholesterol** – too much can increase the risk of heart disease.
- ✓ **HDL (“good”) cholesterol** – helps remove excess cholesterol from the bloodstream. Higher levels of HDL cholesterol are protective for the heart.

A healthy balance between LDL and HDL is important.

Cholesterol can also be classified by where it comes from:

- ▶ Dietary cholesterol is the cholesterol found in foods such as eggs.
- ▶ Blood cholesterol is produced mainly by the liver. The level and type of cholesterol in the blood is what affects heart disease risk.

For most people, blood cholesterol levels are influenced more by the types of fats eaten, especially saturated and trans fats, rather than the cholesterol in foods.⁴



Do eggs raise cholesterol?

For many years, people were advised to limit eggs because they contain cholesterol. We now know, however, that dietary cholesterol (the cholesterol in food) is different from blood cholesterol (the cholesterol in our bloodstream).⁴

What the research shows

About 70–75% of people experience little to no rise in blood cholesterol after eating eggs.¹ This is because the body naturally adjusts its own cholesterol production when dietary cholesterol increases.

Saturated and trans fats have a much stronger effect on raising blood cholesterol than dietary cholesterol does.^{2, 4}

Saturated fat has a greater impact on bad cholesterol

The biggest dietary factor affecting “bad” cholesterol is saturated fat, found in fatty meats and processed foods.³ Eggs contain only a small amount of saturated fat, especially compared to many other animal foods.

Can eggs be included in a heart-healthy diet?

Yes, eggs can be included in a heart-healthy diet. Eggs are a nutritious food, containing 17 vitamins and nutrients, including high quality protein.



SIMPLE WAYS TO ENJOY EGGS AS PART OF A HEALTHY DIET



Balance your meal
by pairing eggs
with wholegrains,
vegetables, or fresh
salads.



**Choose healthier
cooking methods**
like poaching, boiling,
or scrambling with a
small amount of olive
oil instead
of using foods high in
saturated fats such as
butter or coconut oil.



**Limit processed
meats** such as bacon
and sausages, which
are often served with
eggs but are higher in
salt and saturated fat.



**Focus on your
overall eating
pattern** by including
lots of vegetables,
wholegrains, lean
proteins and healthy
fats — it's your whole
diet that matters
most, not any single
food.



Do eggs raise cholesterol?

For most people, eggs can be enjoyed freely as part of a healthy diet. However, for individuals with a current or previous history of diabetes or heart disease, the Heart Foundation recommends limiting to a maximum of seven eggs per week – roughly one egg per day, or 3.5 serves of two (60g) eggs.

References

- 1 McNamara DJ. The impact of egg limitations on coronary heart disease risk: do the numbers add up? J Am Coll Nutr. 2000;19(Suppl):540S-548S.
- 2 American Heart Association. Dietary cholesterol and cardiovascular risk: A science advisory from the American Heart Association. Circulation. 2020. Jan 21;141(3):e39-e53.
- 3 Heart Foundation. Dietary Fat and Heart Healthy Eating Position Statement. National Heart Foundation of Australia.
- 4 Heart Foundation. Eggs and Heart Healthy Eating. Dietary Position Statement. 2024.
- 5 National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian Dietary Guidelines. Canberra: NHMRC; 2013.

