



## Eggs, Spring and Food Poisoning

The egg has been associated with festivals celebrating spring for many centuries. Decorating eggs for Easter is a tradition that dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. Eggs were formerly a forbidden food during the Lenten season, and there are rituals in many countries involving painting and decorating them to mark the end of the period of penance and fasting, and then eating them as a celebration of Easter.

However, eating eggs that are not handled with proper care can cause food poisoning, also called foodborne illness. *Salmonella*, an organism that causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cramps, and fever, can be found on both the outside *and* the inside of eggs that look perfectly normal. In otherwise healthy people, the symptoms generally last a couple of days and taper off within a week. But *Salmonella* can cause severe illness and even death in at-risk individuals, such as pregnant women, young children, older adults and persons with weakened immune systems.

That's why it's important to handle eggs properly by following these safety tips:

### Refrigerate Eggs Promptly

- Buy eggs only from stores that keep them refrigerated.
- At home, store eggs in their original carton and keep them refrigerated at 40°F (4°C).
- Refrigerate unused eggs or leftovers that contain eggs promptly.

### Keep Clean

- Wash hands and all food contact surface areas (e.g., counter tops, utensils, dishes, and cutting boards) with soap and water after contact with raw eggs.
- Discard cracked or dirty eggs.

### Cook Eggs Thoroughly

- Eggs should be thoroughly cooked until both the yolk and white are firm and not runny. Recipes containing eggs mixed with other foods should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 160°F (71°C). Use a food thermometer to be sure.
- Eat eggs promptly after cooking. Cooked eggs, including hard-boiled eggs and egg-containing foods, should not sit out at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Within 2 hours either reheat or refrigerate.
- For recipes that call for eggs that are raw or undercooked when the dish is served (like homemade Caesar salad dressing or ice cream) use either eggs that have been treated to destroy *Salmonella*, by pasteurization or another approved method, or pasteurized egg products.

### Separate

- Don't let raw eggs come into contact with any food that will be eaten raw.

### Eating Out

- Avoid restaurant dishes made with raw or undercooked, unpasteurized eggs.
- Don't hesitate to ask questions before you order. Waiters and waitresses can be quite helpful if you ask how a food is prepared. Let them know you don't want any food item containing raw eggs.

For more information visit:

[Playing It Safe with Eggs](#)  
[FDA Improves Egg Safety](#)

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