

- Nutrition / Health

# AN EGG A DAY CAN KEEP THE DOCTOR AWAY

*It all boils down to this: Everyday egg consumption is not only safe, but good for you*

I read a newspaper article that says a recent scientific study showed that eggs can prevent heart disease. How can this be when eggs are high in cholesterol? —jordan\_ex@gmail.com

The study you read about was published last May in *Heart*, a reputable peer-reviewed medical journal. It is entitled "Associations of egg consumption with cardiovascular disease in a cohort study of 0.5 million Chinese adults." In brief, the results of the study, which tracked half a million subjects over nine years, showed that daily egg-eaters compared to non-egg consumers had an 18 percent lower risk for cardio-vascular disease death (i.e., heart attacks, arrhythmias, etc.) and a 28 percent lower risk for hemorrhagic stroke death.

The study may not be definitive, but it is another good argument toward re-classifying eggs as safe, healthy food.

## An egg is the closest thing to a complete food

In terms of nutritional value, an egg is unrivaled by any other food item, and it is incredibly cheap. Although not a good source of calories—a medium-sized chicken egg supplies a mere 66 calories, which amounts to only around three percent of the average energy

requirement of an adult—an egg is loaded with proteins and micronutrients (i.e., vitamins and minerals).

The proteins in eggs are easily digestible and of high quality. A medium-sized egg contains about 6.1 grams of proteins, enough to supply about 10 percent of a person's daily requirement. These proteins contain all the essential amino acids that are needed for growth and development.

Eggs are excellent sources of essential minerals including iodine, which is necessary to produce thyroid hormone, as well as phosphorus and calcium, required for bone health, zinc that's vital for wound healing, growth, and fighting infection, iron, the essential component of red blood cells, and vitamins A, D, B6, and B12, thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, and folate.

## Eggs are high in cholesterol but are still healthy food items

Despite their excellent nutritional profile, eggs went into disfavor in the late 1960s because the generally accepted belief among health experts at that time is that a high blood cholesterol level, a major risk factor for the development of atherosclerosis, is brought about by the consumption of a lot of cholesterol-rich foods. Atherosclerosis is the major underlying cause



of heart attacks and strokes. Accordingly, the American Heart Association (AHA) advised people to limit their intake of eggs to three to four per week (two for people with known coronary heart diseases) because eggs contain a lot of cholesterol—a medium-sized egg contains 177mg cholesterol, for example. But this advice, as subsequent review of evidence has proved, is not based on science.

After re-examining available scientific data, experts have recently found out that consumption of cholesterol-rich foods has little bearing on overall levels of cholesterol in the bloodstream. Cholesterol from one's diet represents only about 20 percent of the cholesterol circulating in the bloodstream, so lowering cholesterol intake affects blood cholesterol levels only marginally. Evidently, cholesterol blood levels are impacted not by dietary intake, but by genetics and high saturated fat intake. In other words, even if you eat

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cholesterol-containing foods, if you do not consume saturated fats, your cholesterol blood levels will not increase and will stay normal. In fact, the latest (2017) Dietary Guidelines for Americans states that "cholesterol is not considered a nutrient of concern for overconsumption."

Eggs are healthy food items because they are low in saturated fats. Of the fats in eggs, only 28 percent is saturated, most are monounsaturated and polyunsaturated, which are essential fatty acids that are good for the body. Thus, because of their excellent fat profile, an egg a day will not increase your blood cholesterol level. On the contrary, it may keep the doctor away.

Incidentally, the American Heart Association no longer makes any recommendations on how many eggs can be eaten per week.

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