Unscrambling conflicting info about eggs [1]

Dear Alice,

I enjoy eating eggs. In fact, as a college student who eats in most of the time and who has financial and time limitations, I find that eggs, when supplemented with the proper servings of carbohydrates and vegetables, are a very cheap and convenient source of protein and general nourishment. But then I hear conflicting reports that eggs raise blood cholesterol levels, that I shouldn't be eating more than one or two a week, or that it's perfectly safe to eat seven eggs a week, etc., etc. What's the real story with eggs, and how many can I safely consume in a week?

Thank You,

?Not yet an Eggspert

Answer

Dear Not yet an Eggspert (but hopefully soon-to-be one),

You're right ? eggs are a great form of protein, among other nutrients. The reason you hear different recommendations is because they vary depending on a person's health. Each person responds to dietary cholesterol differently, meaning that eggs may have more of an effect raising one person's blood cholesterol than another's. Unfortunately, we can't tell who will be affected in advance. If you're a healthy person, the American Heart Association [2] says you should consume 300 mg or less of dietary cholesterol per day. If you have any of the following risk factors, 200 mg or less is recommended:

- Family history of heart disease
- Total cholesterol over 240 mg/dl
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- You smoke

One whole egg contains between 213 - 220 mg of cholesterol. The fat, cholesterol, and most of the vitamins and minerals are found in the yolk. By the way, the saturated fat content of an egg is less than 2 grams, which is low. If you are in good health and know that your total blood cholesterol is below 200 mg, it is probably okay to have one whole egg a day if you limit other sources of cholesterol. The American Heart Association recommends 3 - 4 egg yolks per week for healthy individuals, probably because they expect that people will eat other foods
that have cholesterol? these include all other animal-based products, some containing more cholesterol than others. To give you an idea:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Item</th>
<th>Dietary Cholesterol (mg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>whole milk (1 cup)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skim milk (1 cup)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheese (1 oz.)</td>
<td>20 - 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butter (1 T.)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beef (3.5 oz.)</td>
<td>70 - 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chicken (3.5 oz.)</td>
<td>75 - 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shrimp (3.5 oz.)</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cod (3.5 oz.)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you're eating eggs and other high cholesterol foods often, it would be wise to have your blood cholesterol levels checked regularly to be sure that they don't suddenly rise.

Whipping up omelets using one whole egg and two or more egg whites is a good idea. This will give you a nice, fluffy dish with flavor, too. If you're looking for other low-cost nutritious foods, try preparing simple bean dishes. Since the fiber in beans helps to lower blood cholesterol levels, this could be a healthy alternative for egg-less times.

Have an egg-cellent day,

Alice!

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