

The Truth about Eggs

As one single egg contains 207mg of cholesterol, many people are worried about the adverse health impacts of eggs. There are different views on the relationship between eating eggs and health. Some common examples are: “Eggs have cholesterol and should not be eaten so often”, “It’s better to eat the egg white but not the yolk” and “We shouldn’t eat more than 2 to 3 eggs per week”. The “Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020” published in 2015 no longer includes the recommendation of limiting dietary cholesterol to 300mg per day. So, should we still limit the consumption of high-cholesterol foods?

The “Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020” has excluded the recommendation of limiting dietary cholesterol to 300mg per day owing to a lack of existing evidence. In fact, the Dietary Guidelines has made reference to the Institute of Medicine’s recommendation that people should eat as little dietary cholesterol as possible. Some high-cholesterol foods, such as pork belly, fatty beef, bacon and cream, are also high in saturated fat, which raises the level of bad cholesterol (low density lipoprotein cholesterol) in the blood and increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

Are eggs a healthy food choice? To answer this question, it is necessary to learn about the nutrients of eggs.

Nutrients of Eggs

While eggs are high in cholesterol, they only contain 10% of fat; egg white is a rich source of protein, whereas the yolk contains unsaturated fat, vitamin B complex and iron. The major functions of these nutrients are as follows:

- Protein helps with body growth, repairs cells, and serves as a key component for metabolism;
- Unsaturated fat helps lower the level of bad cholesterol (low density lipoprotein cholesterol);
- Vitamin B complex helps metabolise carbohydrates, protein and fat, thus enabling food to be converted into energy for the body; and
- Iron helps with the production of red blood cells and prevents anaemia.

Nutrients of a Large-sized Egg (which weighs about 50g):

Energy	74kcal
Protein	6.2g
Total Fat	5.0g
Saturated Fat	1.6g
Monounsaturated Fat	1.8g
Polyunsaturated Fat	0.9g
Cholesterol	207mg
Iron	0.8mg

Source: National Nutrient Database of the United States Department of Agriculture

Can I eat eggs every day?

For healthy individuals, they do not need to avoid eating high-cholesterol foods that have a lower fat content, such as eggs, squid, shrimp and crab. However, these foods should be consumed in moderation (see the table below) in order to stay in line with the healthy eating principle of choosing a wide variety of foods. While calculating the intake, these foods should be classified as “Meat, Fish, Egg and Alternatives”. For individuals with hyperlipidaemia, they should seek advice from a dietitian or a doctor.

Recommended Daily Intake of Meat, Fish, Egg and Alternatives:

Children (6-11 years old)	3-5 taels
Adolescents (12-17 years old)	4-6 taels
Adults (18 years old and above)	5-8 taels

1 tael = meat in the size of a table tennis ball (uncooked)

1 large-sized egg (about 50g)

Revised in 2021