

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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If you were told to eat an egg a day, would you immediately think of a rising cholesterol level? Or would you think of brain and eye health? Most people would probably think of the cholesterol. We've been warned for so long that eggs will make our cholesterol levels go up, half of us are afraid to eat them! That's unfortunate.

The evidence is growing stronger and stronger that except for people with diabetes, in most of us the amount of cholesterol in an egg is not going to affect our blood cholesterol level. If we fry the egg in bacon grease, top it with cheese, or put a sausage patty under it, the saturated fat from those things will do much more damage than the egg. A study by Harvard doctors found no connection between an egg a day and heart disease.

So, other than cholesterol, yolk and egg white, what's in an egg? The egg yolk has about half the protein and most of the fat of the egg. The fats in egg yolks are mostly unsaturated, the healthy kinds of fat that don't raise cholesterol. And the bright yellow color of the yolk? It comes from two very healthy ingredients - lutein and zeaxanthin. These are antioxidants that are active in helping prevent macular degeneration, a serious eye problem that can lead to blindness.

Another very healthy ingredient is choline. This is a fat-like substance that we need for every cell of our body, but especially for brain and nerve function. Without choline messages from the brain would never arrive at our muscles. Without choline

the nervous system of babies would not develop properly, they would be born with birth defects.

The egg white contains protein, water and enzymes. Some of these enzymes keep any bacteria in there from growing. Egg protein is one of the best food proteins there is. It has all the ingredients we need to make our own protein. It is very easy to digest. And there's research that says it helps keep us feeling full, so we don't eat as much making it easier to lose or maintain our weight. It also helps adults build or repair muscle, keeping us from losing as much muscle tone as we age.

Some chickens are fed diets high in omega-3 fats, so that the eggs have more omega-3's than usual. But remember that only DHA and EPA omega-3 fats help our heart. Read the label to see if you can find what kind of omega-3 they've used. Plus, the amount of beneficial fat in a egg is less than that in half an ounce of salmon. It's probably not worth the extra price.

Price is very important these days, and eggs are a great bargain. A dozen medium eggs should weigh 21 oz, large eggs 24 oz, extra large eggs 27 oz and jumbos should weigh 30 oz per dozen. While chicken is a couple dollars per pound and beef is through the roof, most eggs still cost less than a dollar per pound.

To get the most for your money, compare the prices of different sized eggs. If the price difference between 2 sizes is more than 11 cents, buy the smaller size. If it is less than 11 cents, you'll get more egg for your money with the larger size.

Finally, to be safe, check the carton and buy only uncracked eggs. The color of shell has no effect on the nutrition or the safety, but dirty or cracked eggs could be carrying bacteria. Cook eggs and egg-containing dishes until they are at least 160°F.

That's hot enough to kill any Salmonella bacteria that might be there. And keep egg dishes and boiled eggs refrigerated at all times. If they're at room temperature for 2 hours or more they are potentially unsafe.

Here's a great egg dish for Sunday brunch or family reunion. With the bit of Mexican flavor it's sure to stand out from the rest. Use mild or hot chilies according to your own preference.

Mexi-Eggs

10 eggs, or equivalent egg substitute	1/3 C melted margarine
1/2 C self-rising flour	1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt, optional	2 C fat-free cottage cheese
12 oz shredded low fat Monterey Jack cheese	1 8-oz can chopped green chilies

Preheat oven to 350° F. Drain chilies. Whisk eggs until smooth, then blend in margarine. Combine flour, baking powder and salt. Stir into eggs until smooth. Stir in cottage cheese, Monterey Jack cheese and chilies. Pour into greased 9x13 inch baking dish. Bake 35 minutes or until center is set. Serve immediately. Serves 12.

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