

Love Your Heart? Enjoy Eggs

By Jim Chakeres

It's no surprise that bad reputations tend to stick, especially when it comes to food. For years, eggs were mistaken as the icon for high cholesterol and banished from many diets. The good news is, there's no reason for health-conscious consumers to shun eggs, despite persistent misconceptions. This is news to celebrate in February, which is American Heart Month.

Eggs can be part of a heart-healthy diet. Information about the health benefits of eggs is a leading reason why the American Heart Association guidelines were changed in March 2002 to allow one egg per day into the average healthy American's diet, ending the association's 30-year campaign that limited egg consumption to no more than three per week. In fact, a 2007 study¹ reveals that egg consumption contributed less than one percent of the risk for heart disease when other adjustable risk factors were taken into account. The researchers concluded that wide-sweeping recommendations to limit egg consumption may be misguided, particularly when eggs' nutritional contributions are considered.

What's in an egg?

Eggs offer a number of beneficial nutrients that promote good health. One egg has approximately 75 calories and 13 essential vitamins and minerals. Eggs also are an excellent source of selenium and a good source of high-quality protein, vitamin B 12, phosphorus and riboflavin.

Another important nutrient found in eggs is choline, considered essential for normal fetal/infant brain development and for memory, even later in life. Benefits of choline include the following:

- **Reduce Heart Disease Risk:** Choline, like folate, is involved in breaking down homocysteine, an amino acid in the blood that may be associated with an increased risk of heart disease. In fact, research shows that choline deficiency results in increased homocysteine levels. This may help to explain why 30 years of research have shown that healthy adults can consume eggs without increasing their risk of heart disease.
- **Prevent Birth Defects:** According to population-based research, infants from mothers whose diets were deficient in choline were four times more likely to have neural tube defects, such as spina bifida. This increased risk was observed even when other nutrients that help prevent birth defects, such as folic acid, were in adequate supply.
- **Improve Memory:** Research suggests that choline is essential for proper fetal and infant brain development. It appears that choline affects the areas of the brain responsible for memory function and life-long learning ability.

In addition, eggs provide a valuable source of energy and help maintain and build the muscle tissue needed for strength.

As a high-protein food, eggs pack a value that is unmatched by any other food. Specifically, eggs have a "protein value" of 94 percent. And, at approximately \$1.25 per dozen, eggs are one of the most economical sources of protein.

¹ Tran NL, et al. Balancing and communicating risks and benefits associated with egg consumption – a relative risk study. Presented at Experimental Biology 2007, Washington, D.C.

Egg consumption is good for Ohio's economy

Eggs are an important part of Ohio's economy. Ohio is the second-largest egg producing state in the nation, second only to Iowa. Ohio's egg farmers produce more than 7.3 billion eggs annually, with an estimated annual retail value of more than \$585 million.

Time and time again, eggs have proven to be an important, healthy and fun part of Americans' diets. During American Heart Month – and every month – consumers have every reason to enjoy the nutrient-dense food that makes a smart and low-calorie contribution to any menu.

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Approximately 600 words

Jim Chakeres is the executive vice president for the Ohio Poultry Association.