

Eggs are a tasty and healthy source of protein. When purchasing “farm fresh eggs” from your local public market, ensure they are not cracked, do not have feces or soil on their shell, and are refrigerated to 4°C (40°F) or colder at all times. In Nova Scotia, farm fresh eggs can only be purchased by the final consumer.

After purchasing eggs, it is the responsibility of you, the consumer, to refrigerate the eggs at home and properly cook them to 63°C (145°F) before eating.

Salmonella & Eggs

Salmonella is a bacterium that causes salmonellosis, a foodborne illness

- Salmonella bacteria types are found in the intestines of many animals, such as poultry, pigs, and reptiles, and may also be found in the ovaries and/or oviduct of hens passing the bacteria into the egg
- Eggs are one of the primary sources of *Salmonella enteritidis* infections
- After 12 to 72 hours of eating food containing Salmonella, a person may begin to experience symptoms, such as:
 - o Headache
 - o Chills and/or fever
 - o Nausea
 - o Vomiting
- May lead to long-term conditions, such as reactive arthritis



How do Eggs Become Infected with Salmonella?

- The egg may be contaminated on the outside as it passes through the same exit canal as feces
- Bacteria may be found contaminating the inside of the egg when infected reproductive tissue of the hen passes Salmonella into egg before the shell forms
- Salmonella may enter the egg via feces as it passes through the pores of the shell after the egg is laid
- Eggs that are contaminated with Salmonella look, smell, and taste normal so it is impossible to know which eggs may be contaminated – this is why refrigeration and thorough cooking are necessary to prevent illness

Egg Foods Often Associated with Illness

- Shakes/beverages with raw egg
- Sunnyside up and/or over-easy eggs
- Homemade items such as:
 - o Eggnog
 - o Mayonnaise and Caesar dressing
 - o Ice cream
 - o Hollandaise sauce
 - o Custards
 - o Tiramisu
 - o Meringues



How Do I Reduce the Risk?

- Avoid eating raw or undercooked eggs
 - o Cooking eggs to 63°C (145°F) is often sufficient in destroying the harmful bacteria if present
 - o Use pasteurized eggs, egg substitute, or heat treat the egg and liquid ingredients first for recipes requiring a raw or undercooked egg product
- Do not buy eggs that appear dirty or are cracked
- Refrigerate eggs
- Do not serve high risk groups (i.e. elderly, children, immuno-compromised individuals, and pregnant women) these raw or undercooked egg products as previously listed

The Importance of Egg Refrigeration

Eggs should be held in cold storage at less than 4°C (40°F) shortly after being laid. This will help prevent Salmonella present in the egg from having a chance to grow. Cold storage also allows the shell pores to close quicker preventing Salmonella found externally from crossing into the egg. If the eggs are left out at the market or at home, any bacteria found in the egg may multiply to greatly increase the number of Salmonella bacteria. The presence of more Salmonella organisms can increase the likelihood of foodborne illness. Illnesses resulting from the consumption of eggs have been linked to eggs being left at room temperature or not cooked thoroughly.

For more information on food safety, contact your local Food Safety Specialist, or visit the Department of Agriculture's food safety website at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/agri/foodsafety>