

Nutrition facts

Cadence Health and Sneakys

Eggcellent

How things can change in nutrition. Once we thought that eggs were to be feared, that they increase blood cholesterol and had way too much fat for good health. Not any more. It seems eggs are now one of nature's nutrient-packed meals-in-a-shell and they don't cost a fortune either. [Cadence Health and Nutrition Courses](#) and Sneakys director and nutritionist Leanne Cooper takes a look at the nutritional facts on eggs.



What's in an egg?

Eggs are packed with at least 11 different nutrients, they contain a good quality protein (in fact one of the most absorbable forms of protein) and have healthy fats such as omega-3s. Containing a number of nutrients that have unique health benefits, eggs certainly pack a punch; for example two eggs provide around two-thirds of our daily requirement for selenium (which is reputed to be a strong antioxidant). Another is choline, vital for foetal and infant development, as well as potentially keeping homocysteine production (linked to a number of disorders) in the body in check.

Eggs are a good source of a number of B vitamins, vitamin E, folate and iron. Plus they are a good source of vitamin D; important for healthy bodies. In fact iron, vitamin D, folate and several other nutrients found in eggs have been shown to be low in Australian diets, particularly in children and women.

For those nutrition lovers out there who want all the facts there is a full table of the nutritional breakdown of an egg at this link:

- <http://eggs.org.au/health-and-nutrition/nutrition-table>

What about eggs and heart disease?

Current research points to very little association between the consumption of eggs and the risk of heart disease and stroke. We now know that dietary cholesterol (the form found in our foods) doesn't appear to strongly affect blood cholesterol (unlike trans fats and excessive saturated fat in foods).

For those who have a risk of heart disease, for example those with diabetes or high cholesterol, current recommendations are as follows:

"There is little research to guide recommendations for egg consumption for people at high risk of heart disease (e.g. with diabetes or high cholesterol). However, prudent advice is that the inclusion of eggs in the context of a diet low in saturated fat, and containing known cardio-protective foods, is not associated with increased risk." The Eggs Network, Australia

How much?

So we know that eggs aren't bad for us, but let's just take a quick look at how much is enough. Using figures based on two eggs (which is one serving, just to make it confusing) this provides 581 kJ (139 calories) of which 10g is from fat (90 calories). Not so bad!

The Heart Foundation recommends "all Australians can consume up to six eggs a week, in a healthy, balanced diet low in saturated fat, without increasing their risk of Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)."

Good, better, best or just hype? Organic, free-range, omega-3, veg eggs... what next?

If you are mindful of animal welfare and prefer to purchase humanely laid eggs, or if you are health conscious and buy organic eggs to avoid nasties, or you just think organic tastes better you may need to do a little homework. The area of labelling of eggs appears to be somewhat wanting. Sadly, sometimes what you are buying isn't as it seems.

Interestingly there are just three major egg producers in Australia (Nov, Pace Farm and Manning Valley); they represent over 50 per cent of free-range eggs sold in Australia (Choice, 2008). And a whopping 80 per cent or so of our eggs come from intensive battery farms (FREPA, 2010).

Free-range

Exactly what 'free-range' means depends on where you buy your eggs. Free-range eggs can come from small roaming flocks to large flocks of more than 100,000 birds; some roam outside, others never see the open space. I see a frown beginning to form!

The actual standards are quite lengthy and complex, and are currently voluntary. In a nutshell, the standards state: "When fully feathered, in accordance with the current edition of the appropriate State Animal Welfare Code, birds must have easy access to an area on which to range during daylight hours." You can see from this that there is considerable flexibility in these standards. The United States has begun to adopt the term 'barn-roaming' to describe eggs that are laid by chickens who don't roam freely outdoors, so keep an eye out for this term being used here.

If you are really keen and would like to read the standards visit Free Range Egg and Poultry Australia (FREPA):

- <http://www.frepa.com.au/standards/egg-standards/>

Update: Sadly, the Australian Egg Corporation has proposed an increase of laying hens from 1,500 hens per hectare to 20,000 (yes, that's a 750 per cent increase). Hens would be allowed to be kept in these conditions from 25 weeks, even though they begin laying at 18 weeks. In this event the good ole 'free-range' eggs would hardly live up to their name.

Be informed

If you want to know just what you are buying it's worth checking out the Animal Welfare Labels site, which lists the brands and their hens' egg-laying conditions; it's eye-opening!

- http://www.animalwelfarelabels.org.au/dev/index.php?option=com_zoo&task=category&category_id=7&Itemid=227

Or if you wanted to stay up to date with industry changes or take action, you can read more and keep up with all the latest on the Animals Australia website:

- http://www.animalsaustralia.org/take_action/save-free-range-eggs/

Clearly there is a need for the egg industry to pay urgent attention to its labelling to assist consumers.

Organic eggs

This is the best way to ensure you get the whole egg and nothing but the egg; no antibiotics, nasties or inappropriate animal feed. It doesn't necessarily say anything about the farming practices but generally organically produced eggs are laid under very humane conditions. It's best to opt for brands that have an endorsement (look for organic certification logos), that way there is a good chance an independent body has checked out the farm.

So, remember variety is one of the most important keys to a good diet, so enjoy your eggs, along with other whole foods as nature intended!

Nutrition facts

Cadence Health and Sneakys

References

Choice: accessed 18/11/11

- <http://www.choice.com.au/reviews-and-tests/food-and-health/food-and-drink/organic-and-free-range/free-range-eggs.aspx>

Egg Nutrition Australia: accessed 18/11/11

- <http://www.enag.org.au>

Passionate about nutrition? Why not do a short course!

Accredited Certificate of Nutrition at Cadence Health and Nutrition courses! Go to www.cadencehealth.com.au or www.cadencehealth.co.nz.

Created by Leanne Cooper © 2012. This fact sheet may be reproduced in whole for education and non-profit purposes with acknowledgement of the source. It may not be reproduced for commercial use or sale. The information provided is not meant to replace medical advice. Always refer clients onto a qualified medical practitioner for advice if they are unwell.

Sneakys Recipes for Fussy foodies

The following recipes are taken from Leanne's ebook Sneakys Recipes for Fussy Foodies. You can purchase a copy from Leanne's website (www.cadencehealth.com.au).

Cookie-cutter brekky

Ingredients

- 1 or 2 slices of wholemeal or wholegrain bread**
- A little butter**
- 1 egg**

Preparation

1. Using the cookie-cutter, cut out a shape from the middle of the bread slice and carefully remove.
2. Butter both the leftover bread and the cut-out piece.
3. Melt a little butter in a frying pan (to help brown the bread).
4. Place the unbuttered side of the bread into the pan.
5. Break the egg into a small bowl or cup and pour into the hole left in bread slice (you could also beat the egg first if you choose to).
6. Fry-egg until it is cooked through.
7. Flip the bread and fry until browned.
8. Serves one.

Cheesy zucchini scrambled eggs

Ingredients

- ½ a zucchini**
- 3 eggs (one for each person)**
- ¼ of cup grated cheese**
- 1/3 cup of milk**
- 1 teaspoon of butter**
- Toast (optional)**

Preparation

1. Peel then grate the zucchini using a fine grater.
2. Beat the eggs, zucchini and cheese and milk until mixed.
3. Gently melt the butter in a pan, ideally non-stick.
4. Add the ingredients to the pan.
5. Gently cook the egg over low heat.
6. Stir gently with a spoon to create large pieces of scrambled egg.
7. Once ingredients are no longer moist and are cooked serve on toast soldiers.
8. Serves three.

Egg custard

Ingredients

- 1 cup of your choice of milk**
- 1 egg**
- 1 teaspoon of honey (not for bubs under 12 months)**
- ½ teaspoon of vanilla essence**
- ¼ teaspoon of mixed spice**

Method

1. Heat the milk in a small saucepan, don't allow to boil over.
2. Beat the egg in a bowl and add the honey, vanilla and spices.
3. Remove the milk from the heat and add the egg mix to the milk.
4. Place the custard back on the heat and gently simmer, stirring regularly until the custard coats the back of a wooden spoon.
5. Take care not to overheat or the custard may curdle.
6. Serve when cool with sliced fruit.