

Extension food-safety specialist offers information on safely handling eggs

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No matter where you get your eggs, a few basic food safety steps can keep you, your family, or the customers at your business safe. That's according to South Dakota Cooperative Extension Food Safety Specialist Joan Hegerfeld-Baker, who said the recent salmonellosis outbreak linked to "shell eggs" has many people concerned about the safety of the eggs in their refrigerator.

"This nationwide raw shell egg recall and [salmonellosis](#) outbreak certainly brings attention to the safety precautions that one should always exercise when handling raw shell [eggs](#)," said Hegerfeld-Baker.

"Regardless of the recent outbreak or where the eggs are purchased from, the basic safe food-handling recommendations are to keep foods cold, cook them properly, avoid leaving them out at warm temperatures, and do not cross contaminate." Hegerfeld-Baker said that the higher the number of salmonella found in or on an egg, the more likely it is to cause illness.

Keepings eggs adequately refrigerated until they are used will help prevent any [salmonella bacteria](#) possibly present in the eggs from growing to higher, more dangerous numbers. "Cooking reduces the number of bacteria present in an egg, but an egg with a runny yolk still poses a greater risk than a completely cooked egg," Hegerfeld-Baker said. "Undercooked egg whites and yolks have been associated with outbreaks of Salmonella enteritidis infections." Hegerfeld-Baker reminds consumers to use the following food-handling recommendations

with raw eggs:

- Keep eggs refrigerated at temperatures less than 45 degrees F or (7 degrees C) at all times. Discard cracked or dirty eggs. Wash hands, cooking utensils, and food preparation surfaces with soap and water after contact with raw eggs. Cook eggs until both the white and the yolk are firm and eat them promptly after cooking. Do not keep eggs warm or at room temperature for more than two hours. Refrigerate unused or leftover egg-containing foods promptly. Avoid eating raw eggs. Avoid restaurant dishes made with raw or undercooked, unpasteurized eggs. Restaurants should use pasteurized eggs in recipes that call for raw eggs such as hollandaise sauce or Caesar salad dressing. Young children, elderly persons, and persons with weakened immune systems or debilitating illnesses should avoid consuming raw or undercooked eggs.

Hegerfeld-Baker said that once a food product has been recalled, people who have purchased foods within the determined set of recalled foods should not consume it. The FDA said that recalled eggs might still be in grocery stores, restaurants, or homes, and if you have recalled eggs, discard them or return them to their retailer for a refund.

A current list of eggs that have been recalled is available online at this link: www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/ucm223139.htm . To get information from the company involved in the voluntary recall, call 866-272-5582. Hegerfeld-Baker said that South Dakota has not been identified as a state that has received the recalled eggs. For restaurant owners and others who prepare eggs for others to eat, Hegerfeld-Baker suggests a review of their safe food-handling practices to include:

- In retail and food service establishments, pasteurized egg products or pasteurized in-shell eggs are recommended in place of pooled eggs or raw or undercooked shell eggs. If used, raw shell eggs should be fully cooked. If shell eggs are served undercooked, a consumer advisory

should be posted in accordance with the Food Code.

- In hospitals, nursing homes, adult or childcare facilities, and senior centers, pasteurized egg products or pasteurized in-shell eggs should be used in place of pooled eggs or raw or undercooked eggs.
- Eggs should be purchased or received from a distributor refrigerated and stored refrigerated at temperatures of less than 45 degrees at all times. Hegerfeld-Baker encourages foodservice managers to continually provide training on safe food handling for their cooks, prep cooks and wait staff, and to continue reviewing the safe food-handling procedures and related risks associated with all foods.

Provided by South Dakota State University

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