One in four Australian adults take a food safety risk eating raw eggs

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The Food Safety Information Council today released national Omnipoll research that shows one in four Australian adults are taking a food safety risk by eating raw or undercooked egg dishes especially as 12% of them

eat them at least monthly.

Cathy Moir, Council Chair, said that eggs are a simple, delicious, cost effective and nutritious part of our diet but we need to be sure the eggs and egg dishes we eat are safe

"Salmonella infection is a common type of food poisoning in Australia and eggs can be contaminated by Salmonella on the outside of the eggshell as they are laid or sometime later. In rare cases, Salmonella can enter eggs when they are being formed in the chicken. Cooking is an effective way to kill all types of Salmonella, however, lots of people like undercooked and raw eggs and egg dishes and this trend is increasing.

"Eggs, whether boiled, poached, sunny-side-up or scrambled, should be cooked sufficiently to make them less risky. Examples of popular risky uncooked egg dishes include uncooked desserts like mousses and tiramisu; sauces and dressings such as hollandaise, fresh mayonnaise, and aioli; drinks containing raw egg such as egg nog, health shakes with added raw egg; and steak tartare.

"Some people are more at risk from food poisoning than others. Dishes containing raw eggs as an ingredient, that aren't going to be cooked before being eaten, should not be served to vulnerable people. These include babies, toddlers, and young children, pregnant women, the elderly and people with compromised immune systems. Be cautious when cooking for these vulnerable people. For example, cook a boiled, fried or poached egg until the yolk and white have started to become firm or, when making omelettes or scrambled eggs, until they have become set.

"When you want to prepare egg dishes that aren't fully cooked you can protect vulnerable people and other consumers using pasteurised eggs rather than raw eggs is an alternative.

"The Food Safety Information Council is calling on retailers to make pasteurised shell eggs and egg pulp products more available to consumers. While these products are currently available for sale to food businesses, aged care and hospitals we would like to see them more accessible to consumers. Especially as our research shows a third of all Australian households have at least one vulnerable person at risk of severe illness if they get food poisoning, for example pregnant women, the elderly and people with reduced immunity.

"Follow these 7 simple tips to minimise your risk of food poisoning from eating eggs:

1. Do not buy cracked or dirty (e.g. visible hen poo, feathers) eggs. These are more likely to be contaminated with Salmonella. Bring the presence of any eggs like this to the attention of the seller as it against food safety legislation to sell cracked and dirty eggs. If eggs get a crack in them while you handle or transport them, it's safest to discard them or cook them thoroughly as soon as possible, for example in a baked cake.
2. Buy refrigerated eggs and store them in in your fridge away from ready to eat foods. They will keep better if you keep them in the cardboard box you purchased them in and you will be able to check the best before date and have access to the information you need in the rare case there is a food recall.
3. Stop and think about how a hen lays an egg and where it comes from! It's always important to follow good hygiene when handling eggs, even when they look clean, so as to not transfer 'poo' contamination from the egg shell surface to the egg contents and also to other foods you are handling at the time that are not going to be cooked.
4. If you accidentally drop pieces of shell into your egg mixture while preparing food, it could contaminate the whole mixture and it will need thorough cooking. Remove the shell pieces with a

clean spoon or fork.

5. Wash your hands with soap and running water and dry thoroughly after handling eggs so you don't contaminate other food.
6. If you are not going to cook the eggs or the egg dish, don't separate the yolk from the white using the shell as that could contaminate either part of the raw egg. To minimise the risk, invest in and use an egg separator.
7. Prepare raw egg foods just before you are going to consume them and if you need to store the dish refrigerate it immediately at 5°C or below, so the food poisoning bacteria cannot grow.

Provided by Food Safety Information Council

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