Easter Egg Safety

By the Water Quality & Health Council

Dyeing Easter eggs and organizing Easter egg hunts are treasured traditions in many families. Enjoying these traditions safely—without foodborne illness—is a matter of following a few commonsense guidelines. We provide the following Easter egg safety tips based on US Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommendations with our wishes for a healthy, enjoyable holiday.

Buying Eggs

Buy eggs from a refrigerated case. Open the carton and inspect for clean, uncracked shells. The egg carton should be imprinted with a USDA grade shield and indicate a future “sell by” date (see photos below).

Refrigerating Eggs

Any bacteria present in an egg can multiply quickly at room temperature, so refrigerate eggs as soon as possible after purchasing them. The USDA recommends storing eggs in their carton in the coldest part of the refrigerator (40 degrees F or below). Do not store eggs on the refrigerator door shelf, which is warmer than interior areas.

Refrigerated eggs should not be left out for more than two hours. Hard-cooked eggs should be refrigerated within two hours of cooking and used within one week. It may seem counter-intuitive, but hard-cooked eggs spoil faster than fresh eggs because in cooking eggs, a protective coating on the egg shell is washed away.

What’s the Risk, Eggxactly?

Eggs, even those with clean, uncracked shells occasionally contain Salmonella bacteria, which can cause an intestinal infection, according to the FDA. That’s why eggs should never be eaten raw and must be handled safely.

Eggshell bacteria can multiply quickly at room temperature, so refrigerate eggs as soon as possible after purchasing them. The USDA recommends storing eggs in their carton in the coldest part of the refrigerator (40 degrees F or below). Do not store eggs on the refrigerator door shelf, which is warmer than interior areas.

Refrigerated eggs should not be left out for more than two hours. Hard-cooked eggs should be refrigerated within two hours of cooking and used within one week. It may seem counter-intuitive, but hard-cooked eggs spoil faster than fresh eggs because in cooking eggs, a protective coating on the egg shell is washed away.

Eggshell bacteria can multiply quickly at room temperature, so refrigerate eggs as soon as possible after purchasing them. The USDA recommends storing eggs in their carton in the coldest part of the refrigerator (40 degrees F or below). Do not store eggs on the refrigerator door shelf, which is warmer than interior areas.

Refrigerated eggs should not be left out for more than two hours. Hard-cooked eggs should be refrigerated within two hours of cooking and used within one week. It may seem counter-intuitive, but hard-cooked eggs spoil faster than fresh eggs because in cooking eggs, a protective coating on the egg shell is washed away.

Eggshell bacteria can multiply quickly at room temperature, so refrigerate eggs as soon as possible after purchasing them. The USDA recommends storing eggs in their carton in the coldest part of the refrigerator (40 degrees F or below). Do not store eggs on the refrigerator door shelf, which is warmer than interior areas.

Refrigerated eggs should not be left out for more than two hours. Hard-cooked eggs should be refrigerated within two hours of cooking and used within one week. It may seem counter-intuitive, but hard-cooked eggs spoil faster than fresh eggs because in cooking eggs, a protective coating on the egg shell is washed away.

Eggshell bacteria can multiply quickly at room temperature, so refrigerate eggs as soon as possible after purchasing them. The USDA recommends storing eggs in their carton in the coldest part of the refrigerator (40 degrees F or below). Do not store eggs on the refrigerator door shelf, which is warmer than interior areas.

Refrigerated eggs should not be left out for more than two hours. Hard-cooked eggs should be refrigerated within two hours of cooking and used within one week. It may seem counter-intuitive, but hard-cooked eggs spoil faster than fresh eggs because in cooking eggs, a protective coating on the egg shell is washed away.
**Dyeing Eggs**

Always wash hands thoroughly before and after handling eggs. Dye hard-cooked eggs using food-safe coloring and return eggs to the refrigerator within two hours.

**Blowing out Eggshells**

In some traditions, egg contents are blown out of shells before decorating. Use only eggs that have been kept refrigerated and are uncracked. To destroy bacteria that may be present on the shell surface, before blowing out contents, wash the egg in hot water followed by a rinse in a solution of one teaspoon liquid chlorine bleach in ½ cup of water.

**Hunting Eggs**

If eggs are to be consumed, they should be hidden in places that are free of dirt, moisture, pets and other sources of bacteria. Eggs in contact with soil can pick up bacteria, especially if the shells are cracked. The total “hide + hunt time” should not exceed two hours. “Found” eggs should be washed, re-refrigerated and eaten within seven days of cooking.