



Position Statement for Healthcare Professionals

The Role of Eggs in a Healthy Diet

Updated May 2012

Eggs are a highly nutritious food that can make an important contribution to a healthy, well balanced diet.

The protein found in eggs is considered to be of the highest quality, providing the right amount and balance of amino acids to match human requirements. A serve of eggs* provides an average of 12.7grams of protein, representing a quarter of the recommended dietary intake (RDI) for adults and a third of the RDI for children (1).

Eggs are a nutrient rich food being a natural source of at least 11 different vitamins and minerals. Due to the variety of nutrients found in eggs, they can make a significant contribution to increasing population daily nutrient intakes. Research supports this assertion with a US study showing egg consumers have higher intakes of vitamins A, E, B12 and folate compared to non-egg consumers (2). Refer to Attachment 1 for further details on the contribution a serve of eggs makes to recommended nutrient intakes for Australian adults.

Table 1 highlights some key nutrients found in eggs and compares their nutritional profile to other meats and meat alternatives.

Table 1: Comparison of eggs with common meats and meat alternatives in the Australian diet

Per 100g serve	Eggs	Lean beef	Chicken	Fish#	Oily fish#	Tofu	DI / RDI*
Energy (kJ)	559 (133Cal)	529 (156Cal)	576 (137Cal)	357 (85Cal)	594 (141Cal)	475 (113Cal)	8700 kJ
Protein (g)	12.2	22.7	21.4	18.6	19.5	11.9	50 g
Fat, total (g)	9.9	3.9	5.5	1.1	7.1	6.8	70 g
- saturated (g)	3.3	1.6	1.7	0.4	1.6	1.0	24 g
- polyunsaturated (g)	1.6	0.3	0.7	0.4	2.7	3.8	-
- monounsaturated (g)	5.1	2.1	2.2	0.3	2.0	1.5	-
Cholesterol (mg)	383	67	66	40	52	0	-
Vitamin A (µg)	230	6.0	16	5.0	12.0	13.0	750 µg
Folate (µg)	93	10	9.0	7.0	16	22	200 µg
Vitamin B12 (µg)	0.8	1.08	0.4	2.5	3.2	0	2.0 µg
Selenium (µg)	39	10	17.8	25.4	36.5	8.9	70 µg
Long Chain Omega-3 (mg)(3, 4)	110	41	37	379	595	0	Males 160mg (AI)(1) Females 90mg (AI)

Cost comparison^	\$0.60	\$1.49	\$0.99	\$1.70	\$2.90	\$0.90
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*Food Standards Australia New Zealand Reference Value for Recommended Dietary Intakes on Food Labels, Standard 1.1.1 Schedule, Column 3 and Daily Intakes, Standard 1.2.8 Table to subclause 7(3) unless otherwise specified

Fish is perch. Oily fish is Atlantic salmon

AI – Adequate intake

^ Prices from Coles Online as at 18.5.12



Eggs are relatively inexpensive and may be particularly important for people following a restricted diet or for those who have increased nutrient requirements.

Such groups include:

- Ovo-vegetarians – one serve of eggs contains useful amounts of selenium (59% RDI), vitamin B12 (40% RDI) and iron (14% RDI), all nutrients that can be lacking in a vegetarian diet (5).
- Pregnancy – eggs are an excellent way for pregnant women to meet their increased nutritional requirements, containing useful amounts of protein, iron, iodine, vitamin B12, vitamin A and omega-3 fats. Eggs are a particularly good source of folate providing the same amount as a glass of orange juice. Eggs are one of only a few food sources of choline and provide more choline per kilojoule than most other foods (6). Choline is particularly useful in the diet of pregnant and lactating women. Eggs are therefore highly recommended at this time of life. (7). Eggs are also one of the main contributors of vitamin D to the diet of pregnant women (8).
- Children and adolescents – eggs provide useful amounts of nutrients such as riboflavin, zinc, folate, vitamin A, iron and iodine that can be low in many children's diets (9) (10).
- Sports people – eggs provide a valuable source of nutrients required by sports people including iron, folate and vitamin B12. Eggs are also a source of protein which can help meet the higher protein requirements of sports people(11) and the antioxidants in eggs may assist recovery from exercise by reducing muscle and cell damage(12).
- Elderly – due to their soft texture, eggs may be a particularly suitable food in the diets of frail elderly. As well as providing omega-3 for heart health benefits, eggs provide the vitamins A and E and the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin which have been associated with lower rates of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) (13, 14).

A serve of eggs* provides 581 kilojoules (138 calories), representing 7% of the energy in a typical 8,700 kilojoule (2070 calorie) a day diet. Considering eggs contribute significantly more than 7% of the RDI for a broad range of nutrients, they may be classified as a nutrient dense food. When people are dieting, or for those who want to optimise their health, it is important to choose foods that are nutrient dense, such as eggs.

In The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating (15), eggs are included in the meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts and legumes group with 1-2 serves from this group recommended daily for adults. The dietary guidelines for children, adolescents (16) and adults (17) recommend that individuals *'Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives'* and eggs are listed as a valuable alternative.

Overall, eggs are a highly nutritious food that can play an important role in a healthy diet and may be a particularly valuable inclusion in the diet of vulnerable groups. Eggs are recommended as part of a healthy eating pattern that also includes wholegrain breads and cereals, fruits, vegetables, low fat dairy foods, lean meat, fish and poultry and unsaturated fats. Research supports the inclusion of around 6 eggs a week as part of a healthy diet.

This statement is for healthcare professionals only.

**One serve = 2x60g eggs (104g edible portion)*

Attachment 1: Nutrient Profile of Eggs and Contribution to Recommended Dietary Intakes (RDI) of Various Nutrients Per Serve

Nutrients	Per serve – 2 x 60gram eggs (104g edible portion)	
		%DI/RDI
Energy (kJ)	581	7%
Protein (g)	12.7	25%
Fat (g)	10.3	15%
Sat fat (g)	3.4	14%
Mono fat (g)	5.3	n/a
Poly fat (g)	1.7	n/a
Cholesterol (mg)	398	n/a
Carbohydrate (g)	1.4	0%
Sugars (g)	0.3	0%
Sodium (mg)	141	6%
Potassium (mg)	138	4-5%^
Magnesium (mg)	13	4%
Calcium (mg)	49	6%
Phosphorus (mg)	208	21%
Iron (mg)	1.7	14%
Selenium (µg)	41	59%
Zinc (mg)	0.5	4%
Iodine (µg)	43	29%
Thiamin (mg)	0.12	11%
Riboflavin (mg)	0.5	29%
Niacin (mg)	<0.01~	n/a
Vitamin B6 (mg)	0.05	3%
Vitamin B12 (µg)	0.8	40%
Pantothenic acid (vitamin B5) (mg)	2.1	42%
Folate (µg)	97	49%
Vitamin A (Retinol) (µg)	239	32%
Vitamin D (µg)	0.8	8%
Vitamin E (Alpha-tocopherol) (mg)	2.4	24%
Omega - 3 (total) (g)	0.18	12-20%^
Short chain Omega-3 (ALA) (g)	0.06	5-8%^
Long chain Omega-3 (DHA/DPA) (mg)	114	71-127%^
Omega-6 (g)	1.42	11-18%^
Lutein (mg)	0.40	n/a
Zeaxanthin (mg)	0.14	n/a
Lutein + zeaxanthin (mg)	0.53	n/a
Biotin (µg)	<8~	n/a
Fluoride (mg)	<1~	n/a
Chromium (mg)	<0.01~	n/a
Copper (mg)	<0.02~	n/a
Manganese (mg)	0.024	0%
Molybdenum (mg)	0.012	5%
Vitamin K (µg)	<2~	n/a

* Food Standards Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. Reference Values for Recommended Dietary Intakes on Food Labels, Standard 1.1.1, Schedule Column 3 and Daily Intakes, Standard 1.2.8, Table to subclause 7(3)

^ National Health and Medical Research Council. Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand, 2006. Adequate Intake Values (AI)

~ Limit of Quantification



References:

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