

# Are Egg Yolks Good or Bad?

Egg white omelets and other yolk-free recipes have become synonymous with “healthy” to many. But if you toss out your egg yolks, you’re also tossing out some of the most nutritious parts of the egg.

For instance, egg yolks (but not whites) contain vitamins A, D, E and K along with [omega-3 fats](#). Compared to the whites, egg yolks also contain more beneficial folate and vitamin B12. The yolks also contain far more of the nutrient choline than the whites, and *all* of the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin.

Egg yolks have been unfairly vilified for decades because they contain cholesterol and saturated fat. But contrary to the prevailing nutritional dogma that such dietary components need to be avoided, the cholesterol and saturated fat in animal foods like egg yolks are quite beneficial for your health.

## Cholesterol-Rich Foods Tend to Be Among the Best for Your Health

Many of the healthiest foods happen to be rich in cholesterol (*and* [saturated fats](#)). Cholesterol has been demonized since the early 1950s, following the popularization of [Ancel Keys, Ph.D.'s flawed research](#).

But cholesterol has many health benefits. It plays a key role in regulating protein pathways involved in cell signaling and may also regulate other cellular processes,<sup>1</sup> for instance.

It's already known that cholesterol plays a critical role within your cell membranes, but research suggests cholesterol also interacts with proteins *inside* your cells, adding even more importance. Your body is composed of trillions of cells that need to interact with each other.

Cholesterol is one of the molecules that allow for these interactions to take place. For example, cholesterol is the precursor to bile acids, so without sufficient amounts of cholesterol, your digestive system can be adversely affected.

It also plays an essential role in your brain, which contains about 25 percent of the cholesterol in your body. It is critical for synapse formation, i.e. the connections between your neurons, which allow you to think, learn new things, and form memories.

## Eating Cholesterol-Rich Foods Doesn't Lead to High Cholesterol

One egg yolk contains about 210 milligrams (mg) of cholesterol, which is why public health agencies have long suggested Americans limit their intake.

This is a highly flawed recommendation on multiple levels; for starters, “high” cholesterol does not cause heart disease, and beyond that, eating cholesterol-rich food doesn’t cause your cholesterol levels to increase.

Cleveland Clinic cardiologist Dr. Steven Nissen estimates that only 20 percent of your blood cholesterol levels come from your diet. The rest of the cholesterol in your body is produced by your liver, which it makes because your body *needs* cholesterol.

One survey of South Carolina adults found no correlation of blood cholesterol levels with so-called “bad” dietary habits, such as consumption of red meat, animal fats, butter, eggs, whole milk, bacon, sausage, and cheese.<sup>2</sup>

Consumption of more than six eggs per week also does not increase your risk of stroke and ischemic stroke, for instance.<sup>3</sup>

## **Egg Yolks Have Little to No Impact on Cholesterol Levels for Most People**

Further, eating two eggs a day does not adversely affect endothelial function (an aggregate measure of cardiac risk) in healthy adults, supporting the view that dietary cholesterol may be far less detrimental to cardiovascular health than previously thought.<sup>4</sup>

*“Since we cannot possibly eat enough cholesterol to use for our bodies’ daily functions, our bodies make their own. When we eat more foods rich in this compound, our bodies make less. If we deprive ourselves of foods high in cholesterol — such as eggs, butter, and liver — our body revs up its cholesterol synthesis. The end result is that, for most of us, eating foods high in cholesterol has very little impact on our blood cholesterol levels.*

*In seventy percent of the population, foods rich in cholesterol such as eggs cause only a subtle increase in cholesterol levels or none at all. In the other thirty percent, these foods do cause a rise in blood cholesterol levels.*

*Despite this, research has never established any clear relationship between the consumption of dietary cholesterol and the risk for heart disease ... Raising cholesterol levels is not necessarily a bad thing either.”*