

NUTRITION



F A C T S H E E T

Eggs: A Good Choice for Moms-to-Be



Choline is an essential nutrient needed for the normal functioning of all cells. It is especially important for proper liver, brain and nerve function, memory, and transporting nutrients throughout the body. Emerging research is providing more details about the benefits of choline. New studies have found that most Americans probably aren't getting enough of this nutrient.

Are You Getting Enough Choline?

Most people do not get enough choline. Researchers at Iowa State University recently reported that choline intakes for older children, men, women and pregnant women are far below the Adequate Intake levels. Only 10 percent or less of these groups are eating close to the recommended amounts of choline.

We're also still learning more about how much choline individuals need. Recent research supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Health found that the current Adequate Intake level for choline may not be sufficient for all adults.

Choline, like folate, plays an important role in breaking down homocysteine, an amino acid in the blood that may be associated with an increased risk of heart disease. In fact, research shows that choline deficiency results in increased homocysteine levels. Although an egg contains 212 milligrams of cholesterol, years of research have concluded that healthy adults can enjoy eggs without significantly impacting their cholesterol levels or risk of heart disease.

Choline Recommendations

The National Academy of Sciences recommends increased choline intake for pregnant and

breastfeeding women. The Adequate Intake (AI) levels for choline are:

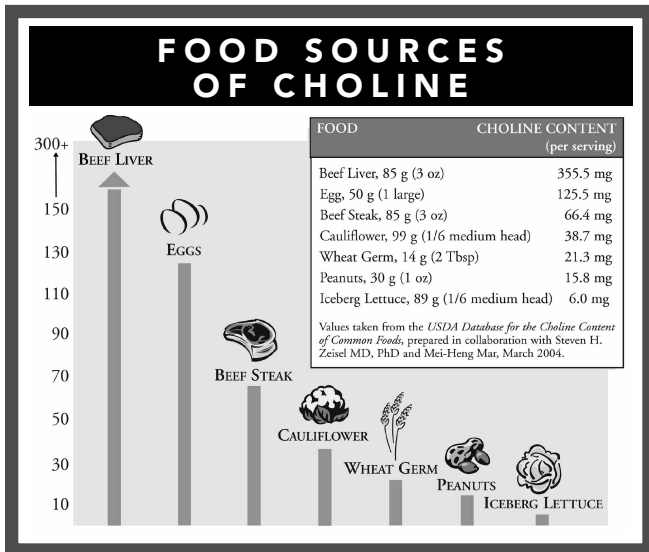
Women	425 milligrams
Pregnant women	450 milligrams
Breastfeeding women	550 milligrams
Men	550 milligrams

Eggs are a Good Choice for Moms-to-Be

The best sources of choline are choline-rich foods. Many prenatal vitamins do not currently contain choline. Eggs are an excellent source of choline, as well as one of the most affordable and versatile!

- Two eggs provide about 250 milligrams of choline, or roughly half of the recommended daily intake for pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- Eggs also contain three of the other nutrients pregnant women need most: folate, iron and high quality protein.
- High quality protein has been shown to help people feel full longer, which may help curb hunger pangs of expectant moms and facilitate weight loss for new moms.

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Did You Know?

The choline in eggs is found in the yolk. In fact, the yolk contains a number of other nutrients including 40 percent of an egg's protein, as well as lutein and zeaxanthin, which help promote eye health. Although eggs contain a small amount of these two nutrients, research shows that the lutein and zeaxanthin from eggs may be more bioavailable than from other sources. Eating only egg whites means missing out on some of the most important nutrients eggs have to offer.

Healthy Pregnancies, Healthy Babies

Research suggests that choline plays a very important role in an infant's development. Choline works together with folic acid in many of the pathways that involve nervous system development during pregnancy.

- **Preventing Birth Defects:** Women with diets deficient in choline have a four times greater risk for their babies to have neural tube defects such as spina bifida, according to population-based research. There was an increased risk even when other nutrients that help prevent birth defects, such as folic acid, were in adequate supply.
- **Improving Memory:** Research suggests that choline plays an important role in infant brain development. It appears that choline affects the areas of the brain responsible for memory function and life-long learning ability.
- **Maintaining Mom's Choline Supply:** The recommended choline intake for pregnant and breastfeeding women is higher than that for adult women. Studies have shown that high levels of choline are transferred from the mother to the baby during pregnancy and from the mother to the breastfeeding baby. This may deplete a woman's own choline stores, particularly if her choline intake has been low.

Healthy Eating for a Healthy Pregnancy

During pregnancy, your need for most nutrients and food energy goes up somewhat. Eating a variety of foods from all five food groups is the best way to get what you need. Ask your health care provider or registered dietitian for more information about healthful eating for you and your baby. More information is also available online at www.nutrition.gov

For a referral to a registered dietitian and for additional food and nutrition information visit WWW.EATRRIGHT.ORG

What's your most valuable source of good nutrition? Registered Dietitians are the experts when it comes to helping people eat well and stay healthy. An RD has the knowledge and expertise to develop an eating plan to meet the needs of all individuals.

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