



# DR ELSTEIN'S WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

*from the world of health and nutrition*

## **Are eggs good or bad for you?**

I eat upwards of 15 eggs per week for two reasons. Firstly, because I enjoy them and secondly, being a vegetarian, I need the protein. So am I doing my heart a disservice and will all those eggs yolks cause my cholesterol levels to catapult into the stratosphere? As it turns out, it depends which research I cozy up to. The initial reviews were encouraging. Consuming three eggs per day actually increases HDL, the protective cholesterol, with no upsurge in LDL, the cholesterol that blocks my blood vessels. There are what is known as hyper and hypo-responders to dietary cholesterol. Hyper-responders absorb more cholesterol from the food they eat but make less, while the opposite happens for hypo-responders, which means it all evens out in the end. If I'm a hyper-responder and I eat lots of eggs my body might absorb more cholesterol from egg yolks, but then I'll stop making it, achieving some form of balance.

Eggs contain substances which protect my eyes against the development of macular degeneration, one of the primary causes of age-related blindness. They are rich in B vitamins, which help prevent Alzheimer's disease, as well as vitamins A, D, E and K, minerals like selenium, and an assortment of antioxidants. Moreover one study shows that consuming eggs might even help with weight loss. One of the research articles I came across did not observe an increased risk for stroke or heart disease with weekly consumption of greater than 6 eggs per week or 1 egg or greater per day.

Then I bumped into Professor David Spence's research. Professor Spence is the director of the Stroke Prevention and Atherosclerosis Research Centre in London, Ontario and one of his keynote articles which outlines his thesis is entitled 'Dietary cholesterol and egg yolks: Not for patients at risk of vascular disease.' You don't have to be Einstein or a Masterchef to work out what he's cooking up.



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## **Are eggs good or bad for you?..... continued**

Contradicting all the research I had read, Professor Spence states that egg yolks bludgeon our arteries with free radicals and inflammation. Egg yolks, according to Professor Spence, increase cholesterol and LDL. He indicates that diabetics and those who suffer from heart disease should dramatically decrease their consumption of eggs, if not avoiding them altogether. For the rest of us, here is a quote from Professor Spence, 'egg yolk consumption accelerates carotid (blood vessels that feed our brains) plaque (blockage) development by age group in a manner similar to tobacco smoking. The older we get, the worse our arteries get, so why make them get worse faster by eating egg yolks?'

How was I to reconcile this conflicting information? Here's my plan. I am going to persist with my consumption of eggs, but at the same time counteract their potentially harmful effects by supplementing with antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents at the time of eating. Professor Spence has sent me a list of recipes with egg whites. For those who are interested in the seminal research that presents both points of view about the benefits and harms of eggs, with Professor Spence's thesis and his recipes, subscribing to the Journal Club by clicking on the link below will allow you to access these, when they are uploaded, within the next week.

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