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Contact: Tom Schlueter (630) 444-3098

(630) 417-9729 cell

Be 'eggs-tra' careful this Easter

Don't hide bacteria along with colorful eggs

The Kane County Health Department wants you to enjoy the Easter holiday, and one of the ways to protect your family is by avoiding potential food poisoning from contaminated Easter eggs. While eggs are used all year 'round, they are especially important for many spring and summertime activities. They are used for cooking festive delights and for decorating and hiding just before the big Easter egg hunt.

Information from the Fight BAC! ("Fight bacteria") Web site tells us that eggs are perishable and need to be handled properly to prevent foodborne illness. Occasionally, even eggs with clean, uncracked shells can be contaminated with bacteria, specifically *Salmonella* Enteritidis. FightBAC! offers these tips on having a safe Easter egg hunt:

Easter Egg Hunt Know-How

- Only use eggs that have been refrigerated, and discard eggs that are cracked or dirty.
- When cooking, place a single layer of eggs in a saucepan. Add water to at least one inch above the eggs. Cover the pan, bring the water to a boil, and carefully remove the pan from the heat. Let the eggs stand (18 minutes for extra large eggs, 15 minutes for large, 12 minutes for medium). Immediately run cold water over the eggs. When the eggs are cool enough to handle, place them in an uncovered container in the refrigerator where they can air-dry.
- When decorating, be sure to use food-grade dyes. It is safe to use commercial egg dyes, liquid food coloring, and fruit-drink powders. When handling eggs, be careful not to crack them. Otherwise, bacteria could enter the egg through the cracks in the shell.
- Keep hard-cooked Easter eggs chilled on a shelf inside the refrigerator, not in the refrigerator door.

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- Hide the eggs in places that are protected from dirt, pets and other potential sources of bacteria.
- Remember the two hour rule, and make sure the “found” eggs are back in the refrigerator or consumed within two hours.
- Remember that hard-boiled eggs are only safe to eat for one week after cooking.

More resources on Easter egg safety, and food safety in general, is always available by visiting these Web sites: [Partnership for Food Education](#) and the [USDA](#). Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers the Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854). TTY 1-800-256-7072. The Fight BAC!® Web site is www.fightbac.org. Gateway to Government Food Safety provides information at www.foodsafety.gov. In addition, the Kane County Health Department offers a wealth of food safety information on its Web site at www.kanehealth.com/food_safety.htm.

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