

# Coloring Eggs

## MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CONSUMER FACT SHEET

### Welcome to Spring . . . A Great Time for Eggs!

It's spring — the season to enjoy the great outdoors and celebrate special occasions, like Easter, Passover, and graduation!

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 egg hunt. Like all perishable foods, such as meat, poultry, seafood, and produce, eggs need to be handled properly to prevent foodborne illness. Occasionally, eggs with clean, uncracked shells can be contaminated with bacteria.

If foods containing harmful bacteria are consumed, they can cause foodborne illness. That's why it's important to cook eggs thoroughly and use a food thermometer to make sure egg-containing foods reach a safe internal temperature.

Follow these food safety tips for coloring eggs and hiding them for an egg hunt:

### Before the hunt

- Wash your hands thoroughly *before* handling eggs at every preparation step, including cooking, cooling, dyeing, and hiding.
- 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). Then 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 eggs refrigerated until just before the hunt. Keep them *fully* chilled by storing them on a shelf *inside* the refrigerator, not in the refrigerator door.
- Consider using plastic eggs for the hunt or buy one set of eggs for decorating only and another set for eating.

### During the hunt

- Hide the eggs in places that are protected from dirt, pets, and other potential sources of bacteria.
- To prevent bacterial growth, don't let eggs sit in hiding places for more than 2 hours.

### After the hunt

- Discard any eggs that were cracked, dirty, or that children didn't find within 2 hours.
- Place the eggs back in the refrigerator until it's chow time!

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