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FOOD SAFETY DURING THE EASTER SEASON

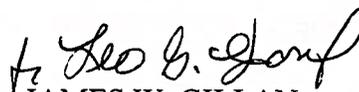
Easter is the time of the year when we enjoy egg hunting. Eggs are among the most nutritious foods on earth and can be a part of a healthy diet. However, they are perishable just like raw meat, poultry, and fish. To be safe, eggs must be safely handled, promptly refrigerated, and thoroughly cooked.

Instead of real eggs, the Division of Environmental Health of the Department of Public Health and Social Services suggests that the public consider using plastic eggs for Easter egg hunts to minimize the chance of food-borne illness from occurring. However, if you decide to use real eggs, the following are safety recommendations that should be observed:

1. Choose the freshest eggs possible and make sure that the shells are not cracked.
2. Separate eggs from other foods in your grocery cart, grocery bags, and in the refrigerator to prevent cross contamination.
3. As soon as you reach home, place the eggs in the refrigerator. Keep the eggs in the coldest part of the refrigerator – not in the door.
4. Inside the refrigerator, keep eggs separate from raw meats that might contaminate eggshells.
5. Check your refrigerator temperature with an appliance thermometer and adjust the refrigerator temperature to 40 °F or less.
6. Wash hands well in warm, soapy water for about 20 seconds before handling eggs at every step: cooking, cooling, dyeing and hiding the eggs.
7. When you cook the eggs, make sure the water is hot (185-190°F) and simmer for a minimum of 12 minutes. Cool the eggs in cool water or simply air dry.
8. When hiding Easter eggs, do not place eggs where they might come in contact with pets, wild animals or birds, or lawn chemicals.
9. Throw out or do not eat any Easter eggs that are cracked, obviously soiled or dirty, and Easter eggs that have been kept out from the refrigerator for more than two (2) hours.
10. Eat properly refrigerated, hard-boiled eggs within seven days.

Be careful in handling eggs during the Easter season. Enjoy egg hunting without the risk of food-borne illness.

For more information, please call the Division of Environmental Health at 735-7221.


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