

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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## “Eggs, Cholesterol, and Confusion”

The health risks of eggs and cholesterol continue to be debated in research and nutrition circles. Here's what current research says. Over the past decade, nutritional advice has flip-flopped on eggs, reflecting the current research studies of the time. On one hand, eggs have been maligned and linked to heart disease, yet they've also been publicized as an integral part of a balanced diet—with some research suggesting that they may actually be beneficial for heart health. Some say eggs on their own are not as bad as you think, as long as you skip the fatty bacon on the side. Others point to eggs as a fairly healthy form of protein that can help build muscle and even improve immune function. However, researchers have found that both the consumption of whole eggs and cholesterol intake were positively associated with all-cause mortality, as well as cardiovascular disease and cancer mortality. They concluded that for every additional 300 mg of dietary cholesterol consumed per day, the risk of all-cause, cardiovascular disease, and cancer mortality increased by 19%, 16%, and 24%, respectively. Given that a whole egg contains roughly 186 mg of cholesterol, this means eating two eggs each day could be increasing your likelihood of mortality from these causes. Researchers concluded that cholesterol from whole egg consumption contributed to more than 60% of both all-cause and cardiovascular disease deaths in the study. On the other hand, findings indicate that those who consumed egg whites or egg substitutes had a lower all-cause mortality, as well as mortality from stroke, cancer, respiratory disease, and Alzheimer disease. Yet, dietary cholesterol was linked with increased incidence of breast and pancreatic cancers, while egg consumption was associated with a higher incidence of ovarian cancers. The primary element driving these associations is cholesterol intake. Experts recommended replacing whole eggs with egg whites or an alternative protein source to protect cardiovascular health and increase longevity. Studies also suggested that whole egg consumption and cholesterol intake were associated with increased risk of diabetes mortality. Authors found that eating more than three eggs a week brought a higher risk of developing diabetes, a link supported by the findings of two additional studies published this year. For those eating at least three eggs a week, there was a “steady increase in diabetes risk.” However, they concluded that obesity was a far greater risk factor.

In the America that I love, the best regimen for lowering cholesterol is exercise and healthy eating. Eating a healthier diet, losing weight, exercising more, and reducing stress can shave LDL levels by 5% -10%. Eat eggs in moderation. While many studies have been published, evidence on the health benefits—and drawbacks—of eggs remains limited and inconclusive.

**Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.**

Surgeon/Scientist/Patient Advocate

27439 Highway 441, Kentwood, LA 70444

985-229-6955 Home | 985-229-3760 – Fax | 985-514-0578 – Cell

[rhowesmd@hughes.net](mailto:rhowesmd@hughes.net) | [www.iwillfindthecure.org](http://www.iwillfindthecure.org)

