

FDA Improves Egg Safety

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced a regulation to help make eggs safer to eat. The regulation will reduce the number of illnesses caused by eggs contaminated with *Salmonella enteritidis* (SE).

This regulation requires the egg industry to take specific preventative measures to keep eggs safe during their production, storage, and transport. Egg producers will also be required to register with FDA and to maintain prevention plan and records to show they are following the regulation. This means that eggs will be safer for people to eat. SE is a major cause of foodborne illness in the United States. Eating raw or undercooked eggs is an important source of SE infections in people.

SE infections can be very serious, even life-threatening, especially to the very young, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems. Symptoms of *Salmonella enteritidis* (SE) include:

- diarrhea
- fever
- abdominal cramps
- headache
- nausea
- vomiting

Eggs can become contaminated on the farm because a laying hen can become infected with SE and pass the bacteria into the egg before it is laid. If the egg is not refrigerated, the bacteria can grow inside the uncracked, whole egg.

In addition to the new safety measures being taken by the industry, consumers can reduce their risk of foodborne illness by taking the following steps:

- Only buy eggs if they are sold from a refrigerator or refrigerated case.
- Open the carton and make sure that the eggs are clean and the shells are not cracked.
- Refrigerate the eggs promptly after purchase.
- Cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook dishes containing eggs thoroughly.