



A Good Egg?

We unscramble the claims on the carton to give you the hard-boiled facts.

By Leslie Goldman



PICKING UP EGGS at the grocery store used to be easy. These days, though, we're bombarded with an aisle's worth of choices: Brown or white? Enriched or pasture raised? And should you care whether the chicken was fed an all-organic diet? In several nutritional ways, *all* eggs are good ones: Yolks are rich in choline, an essential micronutrient known to aid brain function and development (especially crucial for pregnant women), as well as lutein and zeaxanthin—antioxidants that may help prevent macular degeneration, the leading cause of vision loss in older adults. And a 2014 Dutch study found that the amino acid tyrosine, abundant in egg whites, boosts reaction times, meaning your morning meal could literally save your life by helping you brake faster on a slick highway. Still, some eggs do confer more benefits than others. We crack the case.

THE LABEL: OMEGA-3 ENRICHED

WHAT IT MEANS: The animals' feed boasts added omega-3 fatty acids, typically from flaxseed, fish oil, or algae.

EGGS-TRA HEALTHY? Yes. Eggs from one popular omega-enhanced brand contain 225 milligrams of omega-3s each; a standard large egg has only 37 milligrams. Flaxseed-enriched eggs may be an especially good bet for some vegetarians,

since meat- and seafood-free diets can be deficient in the healthful fatty acids.

THE LABEL: ORGANIC

WHAT IT MEANS: Birds must have access to the outdoors year-round, consume only organic feed, and receive no growth hormones or antibiotics.

EGGS-TRA HEALTHY? Maybe. With these eggs, it's possible you'll minimize your

potential exposure to synthetic pesticides and fertilizers that may be used in conventional chicken feed, says Michael K. Hansen, PhD, senior staff scientist at Consumers Union.

THE LABEL: PASTURE RAISED

WHAT IT MEANS: Typically, hens are able to forage in pastures with fresh vegetation (diets may be supplemented with grain).

EGGS-TRA HEALTHY? Possibly. Although there are no uniform standards for how pastured hens are raised, a Penn State study revealed that eggs laid by one group of pasture-raised hens had twice as much vitamin E and more than double the omega-3s compared with eggs from caged hens that were fed just a commercial grain diet.

THE LABEL: BROWN

WHAT IT MEANS: Nothing more than that the birds laid brown eggs; the shade of the shell tends to match the color of the hen's earlobes.

EGGS-TRA HEALTHY? Nope. "There's no nutritional difference between brown and white eggs," says Paul Patterson, PhD, a professor of poultry science at Penn State. "Because brown-egg-laying hens are larger, they require more feed, so their eggs are often more expensive," lending an aura of superiority that has zero nutritional basis.

What About Duck Eggs?

Popping up on foodie hot lists across the country, duck eggs are larger and eggier tasting than chicken eggs. They also have more vitamins: One duck egg contains 63 percent of your daily vitamin B₁₂ needs, for instance, while a medium chicken egg offers just 9 percent. But keep in mind that duck eggs have more fat and cholesterol (10 grams and 619 milligrams, respectively, compared with 4 grams and 186 milligrams in chicken eggs).