



HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER

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More Reasons to Wash Our Hands?

Mary A. Keith, PhD, LD, Foods, Nutrition and Health Agent

Everyone who has heard a news report recently has heard about the people who got sick after visiting one of our county or state fairs. There are almost two dozen people, including children, some very seriously ill, all with the same bacteria.

DID YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?



This bacteria, E. coli, sometimes causes food poisoning. But it can also get into us by other routes, not just food. Water can carry it, so can hands that have touched something contaminated. If those hands then go into a child's mouth, or touch food that goes into a mouth, there go the bacteria too, riding along.

Once inside, E. coli can do a lot of damage. Or it can do nothing at all. There are thousands of kinds of E. coli. Most of them live in us or in other animals all the time. We never know they are there.

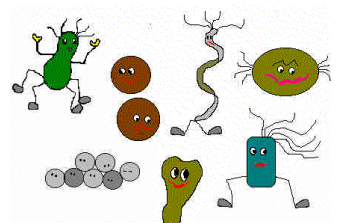
But there are a few that are extremely potent. They can cause a condition known as hemolytic uremic syndrome. This causes severe kidney

damage, and can cause death. Unfortunately the illness is likely to be more severe in small bodies, that is, in children or the elderly.

Because E. coli is commonly found in animals, and because many of the sick people visited a petting zoo at the fair, there is a suspicion that they all picked up the bacteria from the animals. However, the specific type of E. coli that the people have has not been found in the animals. So that idea is still just a suspicion.

Where else could the bacteria come from? From other people! There are many kinds of bacteria that live in and on us too. Salmonella and Staphylococcus are two examples of bacteria that we can carry around. Most types don't make us sick, but there are a few of each that can do major damage. Some people are 'carriers' of Staph. They don't get sick, but anyone who gets the bacteria from them will get sick.

Most of the outbreaks of illness on the cruise ships last year were caused by viruses that were carried into the ship by one sick person.



That person dropped the viruses onto door knobs, stair railings, chairs and counters. Every place they touched, they left some virus particles behind. The next people who came along and touched the same places picked them up. As soon as their hands or fingers went to the face or mouth, or touched food, a pen, a hairpin that went into the mouth, there went the virus too. Hundreds of people got sick, despite the efforts of the crew to clean.

How can we avoid illness without having to stay inside our homes all the time? The easiest, simplest and most effective way of stopping the spread of illness is to wash our hands!



Research has shown that we don't need special antimicrobial soaps or chlorine wipes. Good old soap, warm water and lots of elbow grease do the best job. It doesn't matter what kind of soap, bar or liquid both work equally well. What does make a difference is the how and when you do it.

First **remove your rings**, watch, bracelets and other jewelry. Under them, right close to your skin, is a great place for bacteria to hide. **Wet your hands, lather up with soap, and scrub for at least 20 seconds.** The scrubbing loosens the bacteria and



takes away their hiding places. Scrub the palm, the back of the hand, between the fingers, under the nails.

If you're handling food, about to eat, or just coming out of the bathroom, scrub halfway up to your elbow too!

**Rinse** with warm water, and **dry** with a paper towel, or a clean cloth towel that you don't share with someone else. So that you don't have to touch the dirty faucet with your clean hands,

use the towel to turn off the water. If you are in a public facility, hang onto that paper towel and use it to open the door too. The door handle is surely carrying more than a few bacteria and probably a few viruses too!



If the people at the fairs had done this, especially after visiting the animals, there would be many fewer sick. But why wait for an outbreak. Wash those hands everyday!

When during the day should we wash our hands? We all know to wash after we use the restroom, although many people don't do it. Men are more likely to scoot out without washing than women, but there are plenty of women too who don't wash.

We also need to wash before we start to prepare a meal, which most of us do. But how many of us go to a restaurant, place our order, and forget to visit the restroom to wash our hands before we eat what they set in front of us?

Another common lapse in our food and hand safety defenses is with our pets. Pets have more hair, and are closer to the ground. That combines to mean that their soft, silky fur is a good place for lots of bacteria to hitch rides. As with people, the great majority of these bacteria do no harm, to you or to the pet. But some are quite capable of making you sick without affecting the cat or dog. Turtles, with no fur at all, are very common carriers of *Salmonella*. Turtles should not be given as pets to small children for this reason.

Anytime you touch a pet, feed a pet, or handle any pet items, you are very likely to be picking up lots of hitchhikers. Wash your hands to get rid of them, before they get into you. And please, no pets in the kitchen with your food!

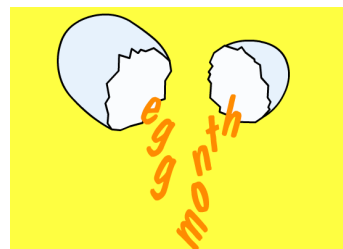
Remember, the first defense against bacteria is to not let them get in. Wash your hands frequently, every day, to keep the nasty germs away!





# Eggs and Good Health

By Loveda C. Perry, Extension Agent  
Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program



May is National Egg Month, making it a good time to learn about the benefits of eggs. For many years eggs have been considered “The Forbidden Food” because of their cholesterol content. Thanks to years of research we know more about the relationship between diet, lifestyle and good health. The current research supports that it is the saturated fat in the diet that influences cholesterol levels the most. With that news it has become clear that eggs can be part of a heart healthy diet. A heart healthy diet is not based on a single meal or recipe, but to your diet over a period of several days. An overall reduction in saturated fats typically results in a lower cholesterol intake. Some high fat, high cholesterol foods to consider lowering in your overall diet:

-Vegetable oils: palm oil, palm kernel oil, coconut oil and cocoa butter. Read food labels.

Choose instead: olive oil, canola oil, nuts and nut butter.

-Animal proteins: limit intake to 5-7 ounces per day. Increase grains, fruits and vegetables at meals and snacks.

-whole milk and whole milk products: change to 1% or lower; however, remember 2-3 servings of dairy each day.

## WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL ANYWAY?

Cholesterol comes from the foods you eat (dietary cholesterol) and is also produced by the liver (serum cholesterol). It is a waxy substance needed for many body functions, maintains cell walls and produces vitamin D and various hormones. Individuals vary on how much their body makes.

HDL, *the good cholesterol*, helps move cholesterol back to the liver for removal from the blood stream. The LDL, *the bad cholesterol*, helps cholesterol stick to artery walls. That is why we hear so much about making sure HDL levels remain high and LDL levels remain low.

So how do eggs fit in to all this? A large egg contains 4.5 grams of fat of which only 1.5 grams is saturated fat. Eggs are a high quality source of protein as well as:

Choline: used for cell formation, liver function and memory storage.

Vitamin D: essential to bone health.

Carotenoids: lutein, which helps prevent cataracts and age-related macular degeneration.

Folate: helps decrease cardiovascular disease and birth defects.

Varying sources of vitamins and minerals.

Eggs can be included as a meat alternative in the Food Guide Pyramid. Currently 5-7 ounces of meat are recommended daily. One egg equals: 1 oz of meat, ½ cup dried beans or 2 tablespoons peanut butter.

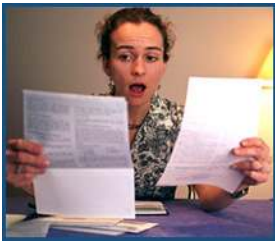
Research is showing that a heart healthy diet can include an egg everyday. Egg whites can be unlimited as they are fat free.

In addition to eggs nutrient value, eggs are economical, convenient and taste good.

To read more about the incredible edible egg, visit the American Egg Board at <http://www.aeb.org>

There are 2 types of cholesterol- High Density Lipids (HDL) and Low Density Lipids (LDL). The





Banks rate it...  
Landlords screen it...  
Employers investigate it...  
Thieves want it...  
Everybody wonders about it...

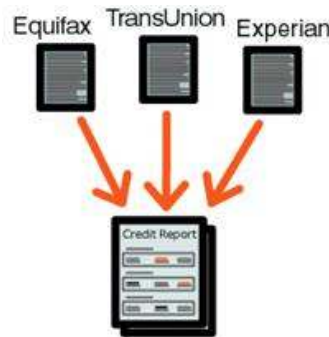
Do you?

# Your Credit Score

## by Lisa Leslie

Even if you are no longer in school you are still being graded. Your grade, also known as a credit score, determines the interest rate you will pay for borrowing money. Your credit score can also affect how much money you pay for car or homeowners insurance, where you can rent an apartment or open a bank account, and could also affect your ability to be hired for some types of jobs.

When someone refers to your credit score they are referring to your FICO score. FICO scores were developed by Fair Isaac Corporation. Each of the three major credit reporting agencies (Equifax, TransUnion, & Experian) uses a different FICO score. So you actually have three FICO scores. According to Fair Isaac they try to make the different scores as consistent as possible. They say differences in scores occur if the credit reporting agencies have collected and stored different information in your credit file. Credit scores range from 300 - 850. Scores of 720 or better are considered very good and scores below 600 not so good.



The following are the five major factors that affect your credit score and how much weight each carries:

**Payment history** – about 35% of a FICO score. Obviously, paying bills on time is a good way to boost your credit score. If you have fallen behind on payments try to catch up and start paying on time. The longer you pay your bills on time, the better your score.

**Amounts owed on loans** – about 30% of a FICO score. Owing a great deal of money on many accounts is not a good idea. Carrying a balance of 50% or more of your

credit limit on credit cards or having high outstanding balances on installments loans can hurt your score. In order to boost your score try to pay off debt instead of moving it around.

**Length of credit history** – about 15% of a FICO score. A longer credit history will help your score. If you have been managing credit for a short period of time don't open a lot of new accounts too quickly. Rapid account buildup can make you look risky if you are a new credit user.

**New credit** – about 10% of a FICO score. Opening up too many credit accounts in a short period of time can hurt your score. FICO scores can tell the difference between a search for a single loan and a search for many new credit lines. If you are shopping for a loan, do your rate shopping within a focused period of time, such as 30 days, to avoid lowering your score. Checking your credit report yourself will not hurt your credit score.

**Types of credit in use**- about 10% of your FICO score. A history of timely payments on different types of loans such as credit cards and installment loans will help boost your score. However, it is not a good idea to open credit accounts just to have different types of credit. You should only apply for accounts that you need and avoid having too many open lines of credit.

As discussed earlier, when shopping for a loan or insurance it is likely that the company will look at your credit score. You should always ask what affect your score had on your rate. You can also order your three credit scores from Fair Isaac, [www.myfico.com](http://www.myfico.com) or the three major credit reporting agencies.

Source:  
Fair Isaac Corporation, [www.myfico.com](http://www.myfico.com)

# Game Violence and Levels of Developmental Appropriateness

## Diana Converse, Family Life Faculty



Leisure activities in the form of electronic video games for youth have gradually become more popular since they were first introduced during the 1970s. Today, recent studies on children's activities have found gender differences in time commitment to electronic games as early as age 3. In a study where parents were interviewed to describe their child's activities in the previous 24-hour period, it was found that girls rarely played electronic games, however, boys played 10 minutes on weekends. By age 6, girls played 15 minutes and boys typically played 40 minutes. A Kaiser Foundation study of 3,000 children ages 2-18 similarly found that 55% of boys and 23% of girls reported playing console-based electronic games daily, indicating popularity of this activity in this national sample. Further, a time study found peaks in playing time from middle childhood to adolescence with 4<sup>th</sup> grade girls playing 4.5 hours in a typical week as compared to 4<sup>th</sup> grade boys playing 7 hours weekly on average; 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls playing only two hours as compared to 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys playing less than 4 hours.

These and other studies have provided research that indicates that most children under high school age are devoting time to playing is so excessive that it may be interfering with other activities. Females have been found to prefer cartoon or fantasy violence and this preference increases from late elementary to middle school



while their general entertainment preference increases from Grade 4-7 and their educational preference decreases from Grade 5-8. Males have been found to prefer more realistic, human violent games and their preference for fantasy violence decreases from late elementary to middle school while their educational game preference decreases from Grades 5-7. Research has found that in general among most youth, there is no significant impairment in psychological functioning caused by game playing, however, some children have a special vulnerability. These "high risk players" are defined as those vulnerable children who, with even a small increase in the likelihood of aggressive behavior, may trigger aggression.

In field observations at a mall video arcade, it was found that youth, primarily young boys (about 7-10 years old), were dropped off by parents and left unattended. Older adolescents tended to play the same game for longer time durations, while younger children moved to other games. Attire seemed to relate to game preference. Boys in sports attire migrated to sports-oriented games while youth attired in black played games more violent in nature. Shooting games were very highly frequented and comprised nearly one half of the working machines in the arcade. There were 11 labeled as Animated Violence and 9 as Human Violence and some also had a Mild – Strong rating.



An interesting observation was related to the game nature. Games had elements such as Asian fighting, guns with silent telescope features; games that allowed the player to change weapons from Revolver to Shotgun to Machine Gun to Grenade; games with lifelike violence that focused on shooting humans with blood to more graphic depictions of shooting ghouls upon which blood gushed similar to that of a cut artery. Some games featured animated dancing girls in bikinis; one required the player to keep bikini-clad girls in sight to increase their “life gauge”; another featured a female figure with metal breast covers; all depicted an element of sexuality by portraying females with large-chests, thin-frames, and scantily-clad attire.



The most notable observation was that there was very little monitoring by adults of play time or play selections made by the children at the arcade. The games were taking on the role of guardian or “super peer”, occupying their activity time and entertaining them while their “real” parents ran errands. The arcade employee did not engage in conversation with anyone in the arcade nor monitor the selections, even though some were rated “Animated Violence Strong”. The level of violence was obviously inappropriate for viewing by the age groups playing the games.

#### Implications for Parents:

- Test games prior to allowing their child to play them to make sure that they are not too violent in nature or contain figures with

inappropriate sexual connotations.

- Parents may also be encouraged to play games with their children to keep informed of the latest changes and current trends in popular games.
- Be alert to the possibility of youth being able to play such games if left unattended or unmonitored as well as the dangers of leaving your child alone.
- Youth must also be educated about the rating systems on games so that they may make selections that are correct for their age.
- Encourage youth to limit their playing time so that the screen does not become their “world”.
- Provide a wide variety of physical activities for youth that will offset “screen time”, such as outdoor sports, crafts, or bicycling. These will keep youth grounded in the “real world” and provide quality time for all.



*Source: Dr. Rose Barnett, Assistant Professor, Youth Development and Public Policy, University of Florida.*



# Dealing with Our Anger

## Joe Pergola, Regional Family Life Extension Faculty

Although sometimes our anger may motivate us to right an injustice, most of the time our anger leads to more harmful outcomes for ourselves, our relationships, or to others.

According to Dr. R.J. Fetsch, Human Development Specialist at Colorado State University, individuals can learn to control their anger using the STAR-R approach.

**Stop.** Notice when you get angry and look for the signs. Is your voice rising, neck tightening, face getting hot, hand shaking, jaw tightening and breath shortening? Do you want to run away?

**Think.** Try to picture the consequences if you lose control. Most of us don't want to hurt our children, spouse, co-workers or others, either physically or emotionally. If you try to picture the consequences both for you and for the person with whom you are angry, it can help you engage your brain before you engage your tongue and fist. Example: "If I lose control, I'll feel worse, be embarrassed, and humiliate myself and the other person in front of friends. There might even be a newspaper story with my name in the headlines tomorrow."

**Ask.** Ask yourself what you're really angry about. What do you want? All too often the family member we're angry at is just in the wrong place at the wrong time. We may actually be

angry about a decision our boss made, the slow driver who made us late, or ourselves for not handling a situation as well as we should have. (Notice the unmet expectations in each case?)

It usually is safer to take our anger out on a spouse or child than on other people. It also is probably easier to yell at our children for not doing their homework than to face the possibility that we made a mistake or that we don't have enough money to pay the bills. Still, sometimes we need to tell the person by using an effective I-statement. ("When you \_\_\_\_\_, I felt angry, and what I want now is \_\_\_\_\_.")

**Reduce anger.** Often we're so angry that we can't resolve the problem until we cool down. Ask yourself, "What can I do to reduce my anger?" Take a walk or 20-minute run, a cold shower or bath, listen to relaxing music, do stretching exercises, call a friend, split wood, or sit in the shade and unwind.

**Reward.** Reward yourself by saying, "I did a good job and I'm going to \_\_\_\_\_." You've controlled your anger and maintained a bond with a family member, friend or other fellow human being. To continue this new behavior, reward yourself, go to lunch, see a movie, buy something special, or spend time with a friend. By controlling anger and thinking about effective solutions, we increase our chances of finding healthy solutions to our problems.

*Source: R.J. Fetsch and B. Jacobseon. Dealing with Our Anger. Publication No.10236. Colorado State University Extension. 2004.*