



EATING ORGANIC

Americans use more than a billion pounds of pesticides each year. Pesticides are designed to kill bugs, weeds, fungi, rodents and other “pests.” According to the EPA, “Children are at a greater risk for some pesticides for a number of reasons. Children’s internal organs are still developing and maturing and their enzymatic, metabolic, and immune systems may provide less natural protection than those of an adult. There are ‘critical periods’ in human development when exposure to a toxin can permanently alter the way an individual’s biological system operates.”

Adverse effects of pesticides include:

- Mild symptoms of dizziness and nausea
- Neurological, developmental and reproductive disorders

One way to minimize pesticide exposure is to buy organic food. The organic movement started in the 60s and 70s as a reaction to the environmental effects of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Organic farmers advocate maintaining a sustainable environment. In 2002, the USDA implemented uniform standards for organic farmers and manufacturers. Organic foods must be grown or produced without chemical pesticides and fertilizers, not be genetically modified, irradiated or cloned and, in the case of livestock, produced without the use of antibiotics or growth hormones.

The top 10 fruits and vegetables with the highest pesticide content are:

Peaches	Strawberries
Apples	Cherries
Bell Peppers	Kale
Celery	Lettuce
Nectarines	Grapes

For more information on the best and worst fruits and vegetables to choose, go to www.foodnews.org. At the supermarket, organic fruits and vegetables have a PLU code beginning with 9, while conventionally-grown fruits and vegetables have a PLU code beginning with a 3 or a 4. Although the FDA prohibits labeling foods as non-GMO, genetically modified fruits and vegetables are required to have a PLU code beginning with 8.

In addition to being free of pesticides and other toxins, organic fruits and vegetables have been shown to have a 25% higher nutrient level than their conventional counterparts. And, according to the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, organic fruits and vegetables have 50-60% higher levels of cancer-fighting antioxidants than their conventional counterparts. Moreover, in her book – The Unhealthy Truth – Robyn O’Brien notes that, “A recent study into organic food found that it appears to: Strengthen your immune system; improve sleeping habits; cut the risk of cancers; reduce the risk of heart disease; reduce a child’s exposure to hidden allergens; and promote weight loss.”

For more information, check out:

What to Eat, by Marion Nestle

The Unhealthy Truth, by Robyn O’Brien