

Organic Food Choices

Most of us **need more vegetables and fruits** in our diets, an important influence for alleviating our epidemic of chronic diseases. Unfortunately, most non-organic produce tests positive for pesticide contamination, which accumulates in the body over the years and contributes to all types of chronic diseases. Washing and peeling produce cannot remove all of these pesticide residues. This illustrates the importance of choosing and growing organic as often as possible, because their contamination levels are much lower, although pesticides are everywhere.

If your budget or food selection is limited, the **Environmental Working Group** produces an annual "**Dirty Dozen**" list to help you avoid the most contaminated fruits and veggies (choose organic instead). They also produce an annual "**Clean 15**" list of the non-organic produce least likely to be contaminated with pesticides, if you can't get organic alternatives. (See <https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/summary.php> for current discussion & new hazards.)

EWG's "Dirty Dozen" (Most likely to be pesticide-contaminated):

- Strawberries
- Spinach
- Kale/Collard Greens/Mustard Greens
- Nectarines
- Apples
- Grapes
- Cherries
- Peaches
- Pears
- Bell and Hot Peppers
- Celery
- Tomatoes

EWG's "Clean 15" (Least likely to be pesticide-contaminated):

- Avocados
- *Sweet Corn
- Pineapples
- Onions
- *Papayas
- Frozen Sweet Peas
- Eggplant
- Asparagus
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Kiwi
- Cauliflower
- Mushrooms
- Honeydew Melon
- Cantaloupe

***Note:** Some sweet corn, papaya and summer squash in the US are GMOs (pesticide-tolerant plants likely to contain more pesticides), so choose organic to avoid GMOs.

Organic foods are grown without synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators, and additives to livestock feed. Organic farmers use crop rotation and animal manures to maintain soil productivity, supply plant nutrients, and control weeds and insects. Organic meat, eggs & milk products are raised on 100% organic feed without antibiotics or hormones. (Although free-range eggs come from hens that are allowed to roam, they are not guaranteed organic.) Organic crops contain **much higher levels of essential trace minerals, vitamins, antioxidants, & health-protective compounds like flavonoids** (produced by plants for their natural defense). Small local farmers use less energy to transport food from field to table.

Toxic agricultural runoff into rivers and lakes contaminates our watersheds and drinking water. Nitrogen-based chemical fertilizers & the **high nitrates in food and drinking water** can be converted in the stomach to **cancer-causing nitrosamines**. **Pesticides in foods, especially glyphosate**, damage the intestinal microbiome by killing the important beneficial intestinal probiotic bacteria that the immune system depends on for healthful function, and promoting growth of toxic intestinal bacteria associated with **obesity, autoimmune diseases, and vulnerability to infections**. Eating organically reduces your exposure to hormones, antibiotics, and irradiated foods, & can help avoid the development of antibiotic resistance.