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When to Buy Organic, GMO, Wild Caught

Organic

Some food products are more likely to pose health risks from chemical exposures than others are. Even after washing, some fruits and vegetable consistently carry much higher levels of pesticide residue than others do. For information about pesticide levels of produce, go to www.foodnews.org. The non-profit organization Environmental Working Group (EWG) also publishes a list of produce containing pesticides <http://www.ewg.org>.

Here is a summary of the current evidence. The list changes every year so check www.ewg.org

Organic is best since these have the most contaminants

- **Buy these items organic as often as possible**, because conventionally grown counterparts tend to be laden with pesticides: Apples, sweet bell peppers, celery, cherries, imported grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, potatoes, red raspberries, spinach, lettuce and strawberries
- **Buy these items organic as often as possible to avoid the use of hormones and antibiotics**, which have been linked to increased antibacterial resistance in humans and possible increased cancer risks. Furthermore, you greatly reduce the risk of exposure to the agent believed to cause mad-cow disease and minimize exposure to other potential toxins in non-organic feed
 - Meat, poultry, eggs and dairy

Organic is good but less essential because there is a moderate amount of contaminants

- **Buy these items organic when you can** because conventionally grown counterparts tend to have some pesticides, but fewer than those listed above: Carrots, green beans, hot peppers, cucumbers, raspberries, plums, grapes, oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, mushrooms, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, watermelon, winter squash, cauliflower, blueberries



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Not essential to buy organic

- **Buy these items organic if you are not concerned about price: These are known as the Clean 15 and have very little pesticide residue**
 - Asparagus, avocados, bananas, broccoli, cauliflower, sweet corn, kiwi, mangos, onions, papaya, pineapples and frozen sweet peas. Multiple pesticide residues are, in general, rarely found on conventionally grown versions of these fruits and vegetables
 - The clean 15 can be found on the Environmental Working Group Website www.ewg.org and the list changes every year.

Buy Non GMO

GMOs hide in the ingredient lists on processed food. In 2014, 93% of corn and 94% of soybean acres in the U.S. were GMO. They can be found under different names that you might not expect, for example: high-fructose corn syrup, sugar (made from sugar beets) and additives and chemicals made from soybeans. Additives including corn starch, corn meal, corn syrup, glucose, dextrose, canola oil, cottonseed oil, soy oil, soy flour, soy lecithin and “protein extracts” are most likely made from GMO crops and can be found in most processed food. Livestock feed is also often made from GMO crops.

Look for GMO free on the label

Organic foods are not supposed to contain GMO ingredients and animal products labeled organic eat organically grown feed.

Processed foods

Even though many processed foods are organic, this classification has some but less value when the food is processed

Organic breads, oils, potato chips, pasta, cereals, and other packaged foods, such as canned or dried fruits and vegetables, may have lower levels of contaminants in them, but they offer limited health value because processing tends to eliminate important nutrients. The process of milling organic whole grains into flour, for example, eliminates fiber and vitamins, though they are sometimes added back in. The more a food is processed, the less health value its organic



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version offers, especially in products such as cereals and pastas. The processed foods with the most added value are labeled “100% Organic” and “USDA Organic”.

Buy Wild Caught

Don't bother buying organic seafood. Whether caught in the wild or farmed, fish can be labeled organic, despite the presence of contaminants such as mercury and PCB's. See Healthy Seafood Handout for which fish have the most contaminants. Go to Monterey Bay Seafood Watch to get the latest information on seafood that is sustainable and which have the most to least contaminants.

Buy Nitrate Free

Avoid nitrates. They are additives that have been associated with a number of cancers.