



MHealthy Nutrition: **ORGANIC FOOD**

Organic food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation.

Before a product can be labeled “organic,” a Government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it gets to your local supermarket or restaurant must be certified, too.

The USDA developed strict labeling rules to help consumers know the exact organic content of the food they buy. Look for this label to determine if the foods you’re buying are organic.

NATURAL ISN'T ORGANIC!

This list can help you make sense of current label lingo:

- **100% organic:** No synthetic ingredients are allowed by law.
- **Organic:** At least 95% of ingredients are organically produced; the other 5% must be from a list approved by the USDA.
- **Made with Organic Ingredients:** At least 70% of ingredients are organic; the other 30% must be from a list approved by the USDA.
- **Free-range or free-roaming:** Animals had an undetermined amount of daily outdoor access. This label does not provide much information about the product.
- **Natural or All Natural:** Doesn't mean organic. No standard definition, except for meat and poultry products, which may not contain any artificial ingredients or added colors and is only minimally processed to not fundamentally alter the product. Claims aren't checked.
- **Sustainable:** Sustainable agriculture uses methods that protect the environment, public health, human communities and animal welfare.
- **Certified Naturally Grown (CNG):** Generally follows the USDA or organic standards but the verification is done by CNG farmers instead of independent certifiers.

IS ORGANIC MORE NUTRITIOUS?

Although there are some studies that point to potential nutritional benefits of organic produce most Americans still don't eat the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables. So perhaps the more important step is to add them to your diet.

REDUCE YOUR INTAKE OF PESTICIDES ON FRUITS AND VEGGIES BY:

- Washing (use hot water and rub with your hands but skip detergent or soap) and rinsing
- Peeling (however, valuable nutrients may be lost)
- Discarding the outer leaves of leafy veggies
- Eating a variety of foods from a variety of sources to provide a mix of nutrients and reduce the likelihood of exposure to a single pesticide.
- Shopping at farmers markets and by talking with local farmers, you can learn about their production methods. They may be following organic standards without the certification.

WHAT FRUITS AND VEGGIES TYPICALLY ARE HIGH OR LOW IN PESTICIDES?

- Visit ewg.org/foodnews for the Shopper's Guide to Pesticides.

CUTTING THE HIGH COST OF ORGANIC FOODS

- Choose organic produce that is highest in pesticide residues (see Shopper's Guide)
- Comparison shop (and look for produce in season)
- Buy locally produced organic foods (check farmers markets)
- Buy a share in a community-supported organic farm to get a regular supply of seasonal organic produce
- Order by mail
- Skip purchasing organic seafood for now - organic certification standards have not been adopted for it yet
- Look for generic brands

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

usda.gov/topics/organic