

# Organic Foods

## What does “organic” mean?

“Organic” refers to the way agricultural products are grown and processed. Organic crops must be **grown in safe soil, have no modifications**, and must remain **separate from conventional products**. Farmers are **not allowed to use synthetic pesticides, bioengineered genes (GMOs), petroleum-based fertilizers, and sewage sludge-based fertilizers**. Organic livestock must have access to the outdoors and be given organic feed. They may not be given antibiotics, growth hormones, or any animal-by-products.

## What are the benefits of organic foods?

- **Contains fewer pesticides.** Pesticides are chemicals such as fungicides, herbicides, and insecticides that may remain on (and in) the food we eat.
- **Fresher.** Organic food is usually fresher because it doesn’t contain preservatives that make it last longer.
- **Better for the environment.** Organic farming practices reduce pollution, conserve water, reduce soil erosion, increase soil fertility, and use less energy.
- **Organically raised animals are NOT given antibiotics, growth hormones, or fed animal byproducts.** The use of antibiotics in conventional meat production helps create antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria. When someone gets sick from these strains they will be less responsive to antibiotic treatment.



### Will washing reduce pesticides?

Rinsing reduces but does not eliminate pesticides. Peeling sometimes helps, but valuable nutrients often go down the drain with the skin. The best approach: eat a varied diet, wash and scrub all produce thoroughly, and buy organic when possible.

## Tips on buying organic foods



- **Buy in season** – Fruits and vegetables are cheapest and freshest when they are in season.
- **Shop around** – Compare the price of organic items at the grocery store, the farmers’ market and any other venue (even the freezer aisle).
- **Remember that organic doesn’t always equal healthy** – Junk food can just as easily be made using organic ingredients. Making junk food sound healthy is a common marketing ploy in the food industry but organic baked goods, desserts, and snacks are usually still very high in sugar, salt, fat, or calories. It pays to read food labels carefully.

## What foods should I get organic?

The Dirty Dozen: Where the organic label matters the most	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apples</li> <li>▪ Strawberries</li> <li>▪ Grapes</li> <li>▪ Celery</li> <li>▪ Peaches</li> <li>▪ Spinach</li> <li>▪ Sweet bell peppers</li> <li>▪ Nectarines-imported</li> <li>▪ Cucumbers</li> <li>▪ Cherry tomatoes</li> <li>▪ Snap peas—imported</li> <li>▪ Potatoes</li> </ul>	<p>According to a nonprofit organization that analyzes the results of government pesticide testing in the U.S., the following have <i>the highest pesticide levels</i> on average. <b>It is best to buy these organic.</b> These are ordered from the highest amount of pesticide to lowest amount of pesticide.</p> <p><i>**Leafy greens such as kale and collard greens as well as hot peppers were also found to frequently contain residues of insecticides that are toxic to the human nervous system.**</i></p>
Clean 15: Non-organic fruits and vegetables with low pesticide levels	
<p>These conventionally grown fruits and vegetables were found to have the <i>lowest levels of pesticides</i>. Most of these have thicker skin, which naturally protects them better from pests, and which also means their production does not require the use of as many pesticides.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Avocados</li> <li>▪ Sweet Corn</li> <li>▪ Pineapple</li> <li>▪ Cabbage</li> <li>▪ Sweet Peas — Frozen</li> <li>▪ Onions</li> <li>▪ Asparagus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mangoes</li> <li>▪ Papayas</li> <li>▪ Kiwi</li> <li>▪ Eggplant</li> <li>▪ Grapefruit</li> <li>▪ Cantaloupe</li> <li>▪ Cauliflower</li> <li>▪ Sweet Potatoes</li> </ul>

Source: [www.ewg.org/](http://www.ewg.org/), [www.whfoods.com](http://www.whfoods.com), [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)