



TOP PRODUCE TIPS

The US EPA regulates pesticides in our food. By the time the food reaches the grocery store the pesticide level is usually WAY below set safety limit due to the washing and processing that happens prior to sale. Some tips:

- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables to minimize the potential of increased exposure to a single pesticide.
- Thoroughly wash all produce, even produce labeled organic or produce you plan to peel.
- Wash your produce under running water rather than soaking or dunking it.
- Dry produce with a clean cloth towel or paper towel when possible.
- Scrub firm fruits and vegetables, like melons and root vegetables.
- Discard the outer layer of leafy vegetables, such as lettuce or cabbage.

ORGANIC VS. CONVENTIONAL PRODUCE

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The USDA has defined organic plant foods as those that are produced without using most conventional pesticides, fertilizers and synthetic ingredients. A government-approved certifier must inspect the farm to ensure these standards are met. In addition to organic farming, there are USDA standards for organic handling and processing.

Recently, organic food has become more popular in the news. Much of this is due to fear about conventional produce and pesticides. With claims made about organic food being a healthier food option for your child, it can leave you confused when trying to include fruits, vegetables, and healthy foods into your child's diet.

There is no strong evidence to suggest that organic food has a higher nutritional value than inorganic food. The factors that influence the nutrient composition in food mostly depends on the ripeness of when it was taken off the vine, exposure to light or heat, and type of packaging.

While there are many pros and cons of organic vs. conventional farming, the most important thing is that children are eating more produce and wide variety of colors. Whether a family chooses organic or conventional is ultimately up to their discretion. It is important to note that organic produce is still grown with pesticides they just have different regulations. So do what works for you and shop local, in season produce when possible.

Regardless of produce chosen, always make sure fruits and vegetables (even those with skin such as avocado and watermelon), are washed well with running water. Washing produce helps to clean of bacteria that can settle on the skin and from handling by farmworkers, store employees and anyone or anything else that touches the produce. Not having to wash organic produce is a very common misconception.

Be sure to check out the full list of tips to the left to keep your kids safe when eating produce.