

# Healthy Food



**1. One of the most important things you can do for your child's health is provide a balanced, varied diet and lay the groundwork for a lifetime of healthy eating habits.** Regardless of possible chemical contaminants, a diet high in fresh produce and whole grains and low in fats and sugars builds a healthy body that is more able to fight off the ill effects of environmental toxins.

**2. Buy certified organically grown food whenever possible to avoid exposure to pesticides.** If you cannot afford to buy all organic, try to at least purchase the organic options of what your child eats most. In addition, some conventionally grown foods typically have fewer pesticides. Use the following table to help you find which fruits and vegetables are safer.



Highest pesticide residues buy these organically grown		Lowest pesticide residues safer non-organic options	
Fruits	Vegetables	Fruits	Vegetables
Apples Cherries Grapes, imported Nectarines Peaches Pears Red Raspberries Strawberries	Bell Peppers Carrots Celery Green beans Hot peppers Potatoes Spinach	Apple juice Bananas Kiwi Fruit Mangoes Orange juice Papaya Peaches, canned Pineapples Plums Tangerines	Asparagus Avocado Broccoli Cabbage Cauliflower Corn, sweet Onions Peas, sweet

**Resources:**

**Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce**- Download the Environmental Working Group's wallet guide to produce based on the results of more than 100,000 tests for pesticides on produce collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration between 1992 and 2001- [www.foodnews.org](http://www.foodnews.org)

**Smart Produce Guide(pdf)** – Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - [www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=37512](http://www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=37512)

**Organics Directory** – Organic Consumers Association - [www.organicconsumers.org/purelink.html](http://www.organicconsumers.org/purelink.html)

**3. Thoroughly wash hands, food and cooking utensils and use proper refrigeration and heating practices to avoid bacterial food-borne illnesses.**

**Resources:**

**Basics for Handling Food Safely** – US Department of Agriculture - [www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Basics\\_for\\_Handling\\_Food\\_Safely/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Basics_for_Handling_Food_Safely/index.asp)

**Alternatives to Antibacterials and Disinfectants: Safer Ways to Keep Germs at Bay** – Children's Health Environmental Coalition - [www.checnet.org/healthhouse/education/articles-detail.asp?Main\\_ID=122](http://www.checnet.org/healthhouse/education/articles-detail.asp?Main_ID=122)



**4. Eat low fat, organic and antibiotic-free meat and dairy products.** Cancer causing chemicals like dioxins and PCBs accumulate in fatty foods, so eat lower fat dairy and meats, and cut away any fat that can be trimmed before cooking. Purchase dairy and meat that has been raised antibiotic-free. Large factory farms routinely use antibiotics as feed additives for livestock and poultry, not to treat disease, but to compensate for crowded, stressful, unsanitary conditions. The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates that 70% of all antibiotics in the U.S. are used as feed additives for pigs, poultry and cattle. Antibiotic overuse in food animals worsens antibiotic resistance, and can contribute to food contaminated with drug-resistant, disease-causing bacteria, as well as possible air, water and soil contamination.

**Resources:**

**Smart Meat and Dairy Guide**(pdf) - Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - [www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=72846](http://www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=72846)

**Eat Well Guide** - On-line database for finding healthy meat, poultry and dairy near you. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - [www.eatwellguide.org/](http://www.eatwellguide.org/)

**5. Be aware of fish consumption guidelines.** Mercury, PCBs and other contaminants are common in some fish. These toxins can damage the developing brains of fetuses and young children. You can reduce exposure to these toxins by eating fish lower in mercury and learning how to cut the fat away from fish that contain PCBs and other fat-loving toxins. (Mercury is found in the muscle.) Serve children “chunk light” tuna, which has lower mercury and limit to a half a can per week.



**Resources:**

**Smart Fish Guide**(pdf) - Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - [www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=37456](http://www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=37456)

**Smart Fish Calculator** - On-line tool for calculating how much fish is safe to consume based on their body weight. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - [www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/fishcalculator/index.cfm](http://www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/fishcalculator/index.cfm)



**6. Buy dairy products from animals raised without the use of recombinant synthetic bovine growth hormone (rBGH or rBST).** The health effects of rBGH have not been widely tested for long-term health consequences. What we do know is that milk from rBGH treated cows may contain the residues of up to 80 different drugs. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) admits that the use of rBGH in cows may lead to increased amounts of pus and bacteria in milk and has released studies showing that milk from rBGH-treated cows could have more saturated fat and less protein than regular milk. (Organic Consumer's Association's consumer warning on rBGH dairy. [www.organicconsumers.org/text5.html](http://www.organicconsumers.org/text5.html))

**Resources:**

**Smart Meat and Dairy Guide**(pdf) - Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - [www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=72846](http://www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=72846)

**Eat Well Guide** - On-line database for finding healthy meat, poultry and dairy near you. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - [www.eatwellguide.org/](http://www.eatwellguide.org/)

**Potential Public Health Impacts Of The Use Of Recombinant Bovine Somatotropin In Dairy Production** - Consumers Union - [www.consumersunion.org/food/bgh-codex.htm](http://www.consumersunion.org/food/bgh-codex.htm)

**7. Avoid micro-waving food in plastic.** Until more research is done on the effects of long-term exposure to chemicals that leach from plastics into food, you may want to take general precautions and avoid plastics that have been linked to health problems. Even the plastics industry recommends that plastic wrap not touch food when heating it. Plastics are classified into 7 categories. Look for the recycling symbol and use only those numbered 1, 2, 4, or 5 for food storage.

**8. Choose minimally processed and packaged foods.** A typical highly processed "food product" may contain little natural food and be high in fat, salt, sugar, preservatives, artificial flavors and food colorings.

**9. Prepare your own meals from scratch.** It might take a little more time, but you'll likely save money and resources, because you're not paying someone else to prepare, package, transport and advertise your meals. Home cooking is healthier and more nutritious because you start with fresh ingredients. Get creative and involve the whole family in the process and you'll also be helping teach your children healthy eating habits for life.