



12 Fruits and Vegetables to Buy Organic

For the sake of our children and the environment, buy **certified organic** or **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** whenever you can. Also look for **locally grown food**, which is less likely to be treated with post-harvest pesticides. Farmers' markets are a great resource for all three!

A 1999 study by the consumer Union (**CU**) and the Environmental Working Group (**EWG**) analyzed the amounts and toxicity of pesticide residues found in conventionally grown food samples by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#). While most of these foods below don't exceed safety tolerances for a dose of a single pesticide, most contain multiple pesticide residues. The CU and the EWG have also considered combined exposures and **risks to children**. One-year-olds eat three times as many fresh peaches, per pound of body weight, as do adults, and more than four times as many apples and pears, according to CU's *Consumer Reports*. In addition, children's rapidly developing bodies are more vulnerable than adults'. Pregnant women should take care, too, as many pesticides cross the placenta to expose the fetus. DDT and related chemicals such as dieldrin have been banned in the U.S. for over 20 years; these pesticides can still be found in foods that absorb them from the soil. To reduce your pesticide exposure, you can peel fruit that you would normally just rinse, such as apples and pears. Some pesticides, like dieldrin, aldicarb and DDT, however, are systemic, pervading the flesh of the vegetable or fruit.

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Peaches - Summer's blushing fruit contains high residues of iprodione, classified as a probable human carcinogen by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and methyl parathion, an endocrine disruptor and organophosphate (OP) insecticide. Methyl parathion has caused massive kills of bees and birds. According to *Consumer Reports*, single servings of peaches "consistently exceeded" EPA's safe daily limit for a 44-pound child.

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Apples- May contain methyl parathion. Both fresh apples and baby food applesauce can also contain chlorpyrifos, an OP which has caused large bird kills. CORE Values IPM apple growers are trying to phase out OPs.

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Pears - Both fresh and in baby food, can also come with methyl parathion, as well as the OP azinphos-methyl, which is toxic to freshwater fish, amphibians and bees.

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Winter Squash- Dieldrin, a chlorinated, carcinogenic insecticide, exceeded the safe daily limit for a young child in two-thirds of positive samples. Another potent carcinogen, heptachlor, also showed up. DDT and its breakdown product, DDE, were detected in baby food squash.

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Green Beans- Can contain acephate, methamidophos and dimethoate (three neurotoxic OPs), and endosulfan, an endocrine-disrupting insecticide, which **showed up in baby food**, too. Acephate disorients migrating birds, throwing them off course.

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Grapes -**U.S. grapes** contain methyl parathion and methomyl, a carbamate insecticide listed as an endocrine disruptor; imports may contain dimethoate.

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Strawberries- The enhanced red color of strawberries comes from the fungicide captan, a probable human carcinogen that can irritate skin and eyes, and is highly toxic to fish. While the lethal soil fumigant methyl bromide doesn't show up on the fruit, it has harmed California farm workers, and depletes the ozone layer. Strawberries are also very fragile which makes it difficult to wash vigorously or peel in order to remove pesticide residue.

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Raspberries -Watch out for more than thorns! These berries can contain captan, iprodione and carbaryl, a suspected endocrine disruptor that has also been found in plum baby food.

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Spinach- Permethrin, a possible human carcinogen, and dimethoate dominate spinach's toxicity ratings, but CU notes that residue levels have been declining as U.S. farmers reduce use of these insecticides. DDT has been found in spinach, which leads all foods in exceeding safety tolerances.

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Potatoes- Pesticide use on potatoes is growing, CU warns. They may contain dieldrin and methamidophos, and children eating potatoes risk getting a very high dose of aldicarb, CU says.

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Tomatoes-Typically, organic farmers use a natural pesticide that is safe and does not diminish the quality of the tomato. However, a commercially grown tomato has lost a great deal of its nutrition because of the pesticides used to keep it safe from its natural enemies. Another reason to eat an organic tomato (or foods for that matter) is that organic food is picked when it is ripe versus the commercial tomato.

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Cantaloupe- Dieldrin (pesticide) is absorbed into the edible portion –not on the rind- best to eat this fruit organic.