

FRUITS AND VEGGIES – IS ORGANIC BETTER?

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines advise 4 ½ cups (nine servings) of fruits and vegetables for the reference 2,000-calorie diet (5 cups if eating 1,200 calories and up to 13 servings if eating 3,200 calories). And, to be honest, it would be great if everyone would eat *at least* that many and would ideally **use fruits and vegetables as the main source of carbohydrates in the diet**. No one has ever gained weight from eating too many fruits and vegetables—so eat up!

But, before we get delve into that, let's see the most recent data on the organic vs. conventional food debate when considering upping our produce intake.

Organic vs. Non Organic Produce

Ahh, the never ending debate—organic or conventional! First and foremost: **just to eat fruits and vegetables!** On average, Americans are consuming approximately 2 fruits and vegetables TOTAL each day—a far cry from the 5-13 recommended! Therefore, **just increase fruits and vegetables each day as a first step**. You may consider purchasing some organic produce over conventional. Organic means the fruits and vegetables were grown without synthetic pesticides, fertilizers or sewage sludge, and have not been genetically engineered or irradiated. The next time you're considering buying organic produce, this short list below may help. Here is a list of 45 fruits and vegetables, ranked from #1 (most pesticides) to #45 (least amount of pesticides) according to the Environmental Working Group out of Washington DC. The "dirty dozen" are highlighted, meaning those with the highest levels from the produce analyzed—it doesn't mean don't eat those, just consider purchasing organic and/or wash them thoroughly.

Even better than organic from a traditional grocery store, is local from a farm in your area. An organic apple that was shipped from Ecuador, for example, may have been picked weeks before it actually makes it to your table. From the moment that fruit is picked, it begins to lose nutrients. Doesn't it make sense, then, to go to a local farmers market, where the produce was picked close to when they're going to make it to your table? And, most of the time, this produce is also going to be organic – a true win win!

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| 1. Peaches (most amount of pesticides) | 24. Cantaloupe |
| 2. Apples | 25. Lemon |
| 3. Sweet bell peppers | 26. Honeydew melon |
| 4. Celery | 27. Grapefruit |
| 5. Nectarines | 28. Winter squash |
| 6. Strawberries | 29. Tomatoes |
| 7. Cherries | 30. Sweet potatoes |
| 8. Lettuce | 31. Watermelon |
| 9. Grapes-imported | 32. Blueberries |
| 10. Pears | 33. Papaya |
| 11. Spinach | 34. Eggplant |
| 12. Potatoes | 35. Broccoli |
| 13. Carrots | 36. Cabbage |
| 14. Green beans | 37. Bananas |
| 15. Hot peppers | 38. Kiwi |
| 16. Cucumbers | 39. Asparagus |
| 17. Raspberries | 40. Sweet peas-frozen |
| 18. Plums | 41. Mango |
| 19. Oranges | 42. Pineapples |
| 20. Grapes-domestic | 43. Sweet corn-frozen |
| 21. Cauliflower | 44. Avocado |
| 22. Tangerine | 45. Onions (least amount of pesticides) |
| 23. Mushrooms | |