To Organic or Not to Organic

So what is the deal with organics? Does it really matter if I buy organic? Is it really better? It is so expensive!

These comments seem to arise often, and I think it is an important issue to address. Organics are different. And yes, it does matter. Non-organic foods are treated with synthetic pesticides, fertilizers and over 3,000 food additives such as antibiotics, nitrites, artificial colorings and flavorings, sulfites, hormones, growth promoters, etc.

> *"Pesticides are designed to, in most cases, kill pests. Many pesticides can also pose risks to people. Some, such as the organophosphates and carbamates, affect the nervous system. Others may irritate the skin or eyes. Some pesticides may be carcinogens. Others may affect the hormone or endocrine system in the body."*
>
> -- Environmental Protection Agency

And we dumped five billion pounds of this stuff on our U.S. land in 2001; who knows how much in 2006. Pesticides get into our soil, our water and the air. Unfortunately, pesticides do not leave our bodies very easily as they get stored in our fat, and, very unfortunately, one of the only ways for our bodies to rid itself of these cancer-causing toxins is through breast milk, which means we are passing them on to our children. It is estimated that the cancer risk could be as much as six times greater for children, aged 1-5, than for adults because of their fragile immune systems.

> *"Breast cancer patients are found to have high breast-tissue concentrations of PCBs and DDE: a metabolite of the infamous DDT pesticide. ...90% of the exposure that has been linked with breast cancer is traced to food, either as deposits on the food or as residues from food chain concentration. Pesticide use represents a "hidden killer" because these chemicals not only directly promote tumor growth, but can suppress the immune system, thereby increasing the susceptibility to disease. Research reported in 1991 indicated that men with prostate cancer have a several times higher level of pesticides in their prostate tissue…*
>
> -- An Alternative Medicine Definitive Guide to Cancer

Some argue that if we don't use pesticides then we will have another E. coli outbreak in our spinach. Sorry to tell you but pesticides do not kill harmful bacteria or viruses. The E. coli outbreak is due to poor management of manure of which the USDA has very stringent rules for the Certified Organic Standards manure treatment, not conventional farmers.

Did you know that the EPA allows toxic waste to be "recycled" and placed into fertilizer? Yes, millions of pounds of toxic waste -- dioxin, lead, mercury and other hazardous wastes are spread on U.S. farmlands as fertilizer every year. And we are just worried about fish over exposing us to heavy metals?

Additives in our food can cause cancer, ADHD, brain tumors, obesity, elevated blood pressure, impair our immune function, have neurotoxic effects, mimic MS symptoms, cause the growth of resistant strains of bacteria and viruses, Alzheimer's, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, lupus, memory loss or foggy brain, gastrointestinal symptoms, allergies, diarrhea, headaches, diabetes, asthma, chronic infections…

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So why organic? Because this means produce is grown without synthetic fertilizers, chemicals, sweage sludge, irradiation or genetic engineering. Organic produce has higher levels of antioxidants and phytonutrients – cancer-fighting compounds. Organic produce also reduces the load of toxins you are consuming, and trust me, they are everywhere. Organic animals are not treated with antibiotics or hormones, they are fed 100 percent organic feed that doesn't contain animal byproducts or growth hormones, and they have access to the outdoors. Note that there are no regulations on seafood now so you decide whether to spend the extra money or not. Eating organic also reduces the amount of chemicals in our water, air and ground, which we or the livestock we consume inherently take in.

These are some quick tips to understand the USDA organic marketing labels:

- **100 percent organic:** All ingredients are completely organic
- **Organic:** 95 percent or more organic ingredients
- **Made with organic (specified ingredients or food groups):** 70-95 percent organic ingredients.

If it is too expensive, I have attached a list of "the dirty dozen", which lists the 12 most and least contaminated fruits and vegetables. If you are not buying organic now maybe you could start with the dirty dozen, it would greatly help.

References

An Alternative Medicine Definitive Guide to Cancer, 1997, 568-573, 592-593.

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