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WHAT'S BEST TO BUY FOR YOUR \$

What does organic mean?

The term "organic" refers to farming methods that avoid pesticides and other chemicals such as bovine growth hormone in an effort to protect your food from unwanted chemicals and the environment. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has strict standards to say food is "organic" on their labels. Fruits, grains and vegetables must be grown on land free of prohibited synthetic fertilizers or sewage sludge, and genetic engineering and irradiation are not allowed. Meat, poultry and milk must come from animals that are free of the growth hormones and antibiotics and must be fed organic feed. Animals must roam outdoors, although that doesn't mean they always get to roam free. European countries ban the use of these chemicals. Conventionally raised animals in America contain these hormones and antibiotics to boost production for greater sales.

What are the advantages of Cage free or Free roaming animals?

Free roaming animals reduce fat accumulation and increases muscle in the tissue we eat. If you compare the meat of a wild hunted animal to that of a farm animal there will be higher saturated fat and less beneficial omega three fat in the meat or poultry of the farm animal with limited roaming ability. It offers a more humane way of raising animals as well.

Do organic foods have health benefits?

Avoiding chemical residues left from food sprayed or grown with pesticides may reduce your risk of consuming toxic substances that has been linked to cancer and/ or neurological disorders. More than 70% of Americans buy organic at least occasionally, according to marketing firm Hartman Group Inc.

Which fruits and vegetables contain the highest pesticide residue?

Apples, peaches, bell peppers, strawberries, imported grapes, spinach, lettuce, potatoes, carrots are highest according to studies. Buy these most often if you want to watch your budget for higher cost organic food.

Which fruits and vegetables contained the lowest pesticide residues?

Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit organization that raises concerns about pesticides, found that many are already low in residues, including broccoli, asparagus, avocados and onions. As well as bananas and oranges which have peel that is removed to protect the fruit.

Why is antibiotics in meat and dairy products a problem?

Antibiotics, critics say can contribute to the spread of drug-resistant bacteria. Milk may be found free of antibiotics but not termed organic such as Farmland milk.

Why is the feed so important?

Animal byproducts leftovers from the slaughter and processing of other livestock, fed to animals used for meat or dairy- some fear might help spread mad-cow disease.

Pesticide free feed is less likely to be transmitted to the animal consumed or the milk or dairy product.

What health risks are associated the use of recombinant bovine growth hormone=rBGH in dairy production?

Some scientists believe the substance poses risks to human health by stimulating another hormone linked at high levels to breast, prostate and colon cancers. The growth hormone hasn't been linked to an onset of early puberty in girls, as some consumers fear. It is banned in the European Union and some other countries, but the U.S. government approves it as safe.

What about the terms "grass-fed" and "free range"?

Despite many products such as eggs produced from cage free chickens or cattle that are free range, many that spent only a small portion of their lives in a pasture, some critics say.

What do I look for on organic labels?

Products with 95% or more organic ingredients may use the USDA organic seal. A product that says "made with" organic ingredients" needs to contain just 70% organic content.

How about fish? Wild verses farm raised?

Wild fish usually are do not contain high levels of PBC's (polybiphenols) may be found in some farm raised fish such as salmon.

What fish have the highest pollutants?

Methyl mercury, PBC's and Cadmium are some of the contaminants present in some fish. Fresh water fish in certain regions seem to be the most contaminated and large saltwater fish such as Shark, King Mackerel, and Swordfish. Oysters contained the most cadmium. Canned albacore tuna is high in methyl mercury and light canned or fresh wild Pacific tuna may be a better choice but it still contains some. The FDA warns pregnant women especially to limit consumption of these fish. I recommend to eliminate them. It is wise to check your local Environmental Protection Agency to see what fish should be watched or go to Monterey Bay Aquarium-Seafood Watch Program:

http://www.mbaaq.org/cr/cr_seafoodwatch/sfw_aboutsfw.asp

Why are pollutants such as methyl mercury so harmful?

Neurological problems such as autism, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and possibly Parkinson's and Alzheimer's Disease on the rise all have been linked to potential risks due to increased pollutants that affect our normal neurological function.

Conclusion

Eating a varied diet including organics in foods more frequently consumed and known to be high in pesticides, hormones, antibiotics and other contaminants. A diet containing more fruits, whole grains and vegetables instead of excess or high consumption of animal protein sources such as dairy, poultry, fish and meat (these may cause too high an intake of saturated fat and excess protein linked with tumor growth and osteoporosis). Plant based foods increase antioxidants, phytonutrients (plant based foods which contain over a thousand special nutrients), improve bioavailability and balance of certain nutrients such as calcium.

Web sites:

<http://www.ifoam.org/> - International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

<http://www.soilassociation.org/> - Soil Association

<http://ofrf.org>