

# The York University Staff Association Health and Wellness News and Views

## Buying organic

Spring has sprung; therefore we will have the opportunity to purchase our produce locally very soon. The question is do we buy organic or not?? Once solely the domain of the "granola crowd", organic foods have become big business. Spending on organic products has grown by nearly 20 percent over the past decade. Responding to the growing demand, mainstream grocers are stocking more organic produce, milk; baby food, meats etc, and many health-food chains have opened dozens of stores in the past five years.

By now, everyone knows there is a benefit to buying some things organic products. But these days we are faced with the option of getting everything organic -- from fruits, veggies and meat to mattresses and clothing. Although Prices for organic foods have dropped in the past five years, organic items are still generally more expensive than conventionally grown foods. Therefore it can cause heavy damage to your wallet. New science shows that it's more important to buy some foods produced organically than it is others. The question is... What foods should you buy organic? And what foods can you can you get away without buying organic? Even most organic advocates say certain fruits and vegetables are probably not worth the premium.

You should try to buy organic foods that are notorious for having the heaviest burden of pesticides, chemicals, additives and hormones. Avocado, Bananas, Pineapple, Kiwi, Mango, and papaya, all of these fruits have thick skin that protects them from pesticides, but you still want to rinse before use.

Vegetables such as Onions, cabbage, broccoli, and asparagus face fewer threats from pesticides because of their growing conditions.



If you have budget constraints, your money is doing more for your health when you put it towards certain organic varieties. The following fruits and vegetables are known to have the highest levels of pesticides, making them the most important to buy organic.

- Apples
- Celery
- Sweet bell peppers
- Peaches
- Strawberries
- Spinach
- Grapes
- Lettuce
- Cucumbers
- Blueberries (domestic)
- Potatoes

Widespread use of antibiotics and growth hormones is a larger issue for those considering organic meat, poultry, eggs, and milk. Not only is organic meat is free of most antibiotics, it is also free of added hormones, and human growth hormones. These animals are also not allowed to eat genetically modified foods. They are raised more ethically and humanely, meaning they are allowed to range freely and not confined to pens. In addition, the land that they eat from and live on must be pesticide free.

Don't be confused between "natural" and "organic". You may see "natural" and other terms such as "all natural," "free-range" or "hormone-free" on food labels. Don't confuse them with the term "organic." Only foods that are grown and processed according to Health Canada organic standards can be labeled organic.

The bottom line is the decision to buy organic might be different for different people, for different reasons. If you can choose organic, if they are accessible and affordable for you, go for it. However, remember, organic or not it is still important to eat our fruits and veggies.