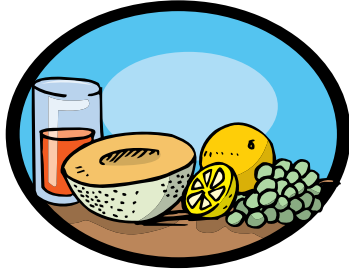




The Healthy Kids Series

Going Organic With Your Child

BY KIMBERLY TRUBA



It seems as though each week new organic food stores and farmers markets are popping up in neighborhoods throughout the region. The rapid growth of these new stores can often leave parents confused about what the term organic actually means, what all the hype is about and of course, whether the health benefits are worth the extra cost.

Organic foods are defined as ones produced by a farmer who finds it important to recycle the resources and enhance the surrounding environment for future generations, according to the United States Department of Agricultural (USDA) consumer brochure. When a farm or a company is looking to “go organic” with products, they must seek approval from the USDA. A government-approved certifier visits the farm to inspect how the food is being grown and make sure the farmer is meeting all of the rules outlined by the USDA organic standards. Not only must the products be inspected, the farmer also needs to produce an organic system plan which describes the practices and substances used in producing the product, as well as a history of how the land has been used during the prior three years. Once approved, the products are stamped with the USDA organic seal.

Labels for organic products fall in one of the following three categories:

“100% organic” means all ingredients in the product are organic
 “Organic” means the product contains at least 95% organic ingredients.

“Made with organic ingredients” means 30% of the product comes from genetically modified organisms and the remaining 70% of the ingredients are organic

Virtually every major food item has an organic counterpart. From dairy to pasta to vegetables, it is possible for a family to eat all organic, all the time. But should you? According to a recent article in Business Week magazine, the biggest benefits of eating organic come from fruits and vegetables. The non-organic version of many fruits and vegetables can carry a high amount of pesticides. During the growing process, farmers often use pesticides to help induce the growth of products and to keep weeds away. Consuming these pesticides can block the body from absorbing important nutrients from food, an especially concerning danger when it comes to children’s developing bodies. Produce with a peel or skin that needs to be removed before eating, like bananas, already has protection from pesticides, but the safest, and healthiest version of other items, like apples, strawberries and tomatoes, are the ones labeled organic.

Buying the following organic fruits and vegetables can reduce the number of pesticides your family consumes by almost 80 percent, according to Environmental Working Group (EWG), a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C.

- ✓ Apples
- ✓ Cherries
- ✓ Grapes
- ✓ Nectarines
- ✓ Peaches
- ✓ Pears
- ✓ Raspberries
- ✓ Strawberries
- ✓ Bell peppers
- ✓ Celery
- ✓ Potatoes
- ✓ Spinach

Organic fruits and vegetables have proven benefits, but what about other products? The EWG says that data is limited when it comes to meats and dairy products but that the

consumption of the organic versions is a good idea, especially for a family that eats a lot of meat. Consider buying organic items like milk, eggs, beef and chicken. When it comes to processed meat items made from multiple ingredients, like hot dogs, it can be worth the splurge to buy organic.

Whether or not you buy organic, you can reduce the amount of pesticide residue on foods by taking the following precautions:

Thoroughly rinse produce, even those with inedible skins like bananas and cantaloupe.

Remove the outer leaves of leafy vegetables.

Trim fat and skin from meat and poultry as pesticides can collect in fatty areas.

Plant a garden at home and grow your own fruits and vegetables. Start with easy items like tomatoes or raspberries.

The nutrition industry is currently debating the benefits of organic eating. A good rule of thumb for the everyday grocery shopper is that if you can afford to buy organic, and want to, it’s a great way to eat healthy. If you can’t, use common sense about choosing foods that are high in nutrients and low in pesticides and hormones. Either way, a well-rounded diet and regular exercise is sure to create a healthy, happy family. [wFm](#)

Articles in the Healthy Kids Series are presented by the Marine Corps Marathon Healthy Kids Fun Run to be held on October 30, 2010. The one-mile run welcomes children ages 6-13.

Registration opens May 12, visit www.marinemarathon.com to register. Kimberly Truba is the Marketing Coordinator for the Marine Corps Marathon. No federal or Marine Corps endorsement implied.

