

ORGANICS – WHAT’S THE DEAL?



Making healthy food choices by increasing consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables is important. It may also lend to the possibility of eating more organic foods. So what is organic and are organic foods necessarily better for you?

The label “organic” certifies that the product contains at least 95% organic ingredients. “Organic” foods are produced under the guidance of the USDA National Organic Program regulations (NOP). However this certification does not determine nutritional status or food safety for the organic products. Current reviews of

nutritional quality for organics and conventional foods show that the nutrients are essentially the same. Thus, shop for the best values and be less concerned with organic or non-organic and more concerned with getting 5 fruits and vegetables daily. Here are a few insights to help you make the best decision for you and your family:

- “Locally grown” does not indicate that the food is organically grown or meets the NOP regulations. The word “natural” also does not mean it is organic. Cage-free eggs do not mean they are organic.
- Generally, both organic and conventional foods have good food safety records. Pesticide residues as well as hormones, antibiotics, fungicides, and herbicides are usually less on organic foods but contamination by E. coli is similar for both. However, it is better to eat fruits and vegetables with pesticides than to not eat any fruits or vegetables.
- Generally the cost for organic foods, particularly milk and produce, is higher than for conventional foods. Consumers must judge for themselves what the value of the cost difference is.
- Organic foods with the best benefits include:
 - Peaches, nectarines, apricots
 - Apples, pears
 - Sweet bell peppers, celery
 - Strawberries, raspberries, cherries
 - Spinach, lettuce
 - Potatoes

Jefferson County is offering it’s employees access to discounted organic produce available for pick up at several county office locations. Please visit www.doortodoororganics.com and/or contact Lise Melbye, MS, MPH LiveLife Wellness Coordinator livelife@healthbreakinc.com (303)271-8416

Resources/References

- 1) American Dietetic Association, Hot Topics, October 2009, www.eatright.org
- 2) United States Dept of Agriculture, The National Organic Program, www.ams.usda.gov/nop
- 3) University of Michigan, Health Minute Update, March, 2003, www.med.umich.edu/opm/newspage/2003/organicfood.htm
- 4) Nutrition Action Healthletter, Organic food: worth the price?, July-August, 2007, David Schardt

Provided by [JCPH Nutrition Services](#). Over 50 years of helping Jefferson County residents with nutrition education and services, including the Women, Infant & Children Program assuring pregnant women and children ages five and under in the County have access to healthy foods and nutrition education. Call Nutrition Services Manager, Sara Lemley, RD 303-239-7137 for more information.