

Everyday, we eat, drink, breathe, and touch chemicals that exist around us. The chemicals can affect our health. Planned Parenthood GREEN CHOICES will give you the information you need to make choices for better health and a greener environment — for yourself, your family, and your community.

What do I need to know about fruits and vegetables?

- Eating fruits and vegetables is **good for your health**:
 - They contain many vitamins and nutrients.
 - They can lower your risk of getting cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure.
- Some fruits and vegetables have pesticides on them.



What should I know about pesticides?

- Most farmers use pesticides to grow fruits and vegetables.
- Pesticides are used to *kill* pests, including bugs, rodents, and weeds.
- They are made with thousands of chemicals that can be harmful to your health.
- Pesticides can **disrupt hormones** or **cause cancer** and other health problems.
- They can increase a child's risk of having **birth defects** and **learning disabilities**.
- How much harm may be done depends on
 - how harmful the pesticide is
 - how you come in contact with it — through your skin, breathing it in, or eating it
 - how long you are in contact with it
 - your age — fetuses and very young children are at the highest risk of harm
 - your genes (family history)
 - other pesticides and chemicals with which you've had contact
- The government keeps watch over how pesticides are used. But we all still come in contact with many in fruits and vegetables.

How can I avoid pesticides in my food?

- **Buy ORGANIC produce when you can.**
 - Some farmers grow food without using pesticides or other dangerous chemicals. This is called **organic farming**.
 - Organic fruits and vegetables that meet government standards will have this label:
 - The government guarantees that foods with this label are farmed **without**
 - pesticides
 - chemical fertilizers
 - sewage sludge
 - bioengineered seed or plants
 - Most of the time, **if it is not labeled organic, it is not organic.**
- **Wash, scrub, and peel** produce before cooking or eating it.



(USDA stands for U.S. Department of Agriculture.)



- Check out your local **farmers market**. Farmers markets may charge less than grocery stores for organic produce. Go to www.localharvest.org to find one near you.
- Since buying all organic produce is expensive, consider doing so just for the fruits and vegetables that are shown to be most toxic. Get the Environmental Working Group's **free shoppers guide** at www.ewg.org/sites/foodnews/ to help you. It gives an up-to-date list of the current



“**Dirty Dozen**” — foods with so much pesticide that you should always buy organic if you can

“**Clean 15**” — foods with so little pesticide that you may not need to buy organic

- Think about growing your own organic herbs and vegetables. You could start with a small patch or window box.
- Use pesticides as little as you can.

Where can I get more information?

- The Advantages of Organic Food — You Are What You Eat: www.organicfoodinfo.net
- Environmental Working Group: www.ewg.org
- Local Harvest — find organic food at farmers markets, co-ops, farms, and restaurants near you by using this map: www.localharvest.org
- U.S. Department of Agriculture: www.usda.gov
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov

