

Beth Greer
***SuperNatural Mom*©**

“It Really Bugs Me”

Imagine picking a fruit or vegetable from your garden, spraying it with bug spray, and then handing it to your child to eat. Does that seem absurd? Well, that’s exactly what we do each day with store-bought non-organic produce. The chemicals are invisible, odorless and tasteless. We do it because most of us are unaware. For example, the teenage daughter of a friend of mine babysat for my eight year old for the first time the other night. I felt comfortable leaving my child with her; I told her to please feel free to help herself to any food she wanted in my refrigerator or pantry. The next day I touched base with her mom who said all went well, except that her daughter had phoned her from my home and exclaimed: "Mom, *everything* in their kitchen is organic. It's so weird!" I was stunned that a 16 year old would find a kitchen filled with healthy, organic* food to be weird and then I realized that “weird” to a teenager, usually means something they haven’t seen before, or been told about.

So, here are the top three reasons to choose organic fruits and vegetables:

1. Pesticides are pervasive. Those juicy strawberries now being displayed in the market may look luscious, but they have a dark side. Their red color has been enhanced by a fungicide and they have been infused with methyl bromide, a gas that is injected by tractor into their growing soil. These substances then become part of fruits’ flesh, and can’t be washed off.

2. Organic foods have a higher nutritional value and can help fight disease in our body. An organically grown apple has 300% greater Vitamin C and 61% greater calcium content than a conventional or non-organic apple. Also, the amount of calcium in organic spinach is 7 times greater than in non-organic spinach and the potassium is an astounding 117 times greater in the organic. In addition, researchers found that organic fruits and vegetables have significantly higher levels of cancer-fighting antioxidants than conventionally grown foods

3. Pesticides are toxic to us and the environment. A recent study from Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York, found that women with high levels of DDE (a derivative of DDT) in their blood were four times as likely to develop breast cancer as women with low levels. Pesticides are known to harm the human neurological system as well as depleting the Earth's protective ozone layer leading to more skin cancer.

Here are the 12 most contaminated fruits and vegetables according to the Agricultural Department, and their toxicity scores (see box below):

Rank	Crop	Score (200 = most toxic)
1	Strawberries	189
2	Bell Peppers (tie)	155
2	Spinach (tie)	155
4	Cherries (USA)	154
5	Peaches	150
6	Cantaloupe (Mexico)	142
7	Celery	129
8	Apples	124
9	Apricots	123
10	Green Beans	122
11	Grapes (Chile)	118
12	Cucumbers	117

Source: Environmental Working Group, compiled from FDA and EPA data.

Warning: peanuts, peanut butter, and coffee have the largest concentration of pesticides of any food.

Given all these facts, why do farmers still use pesticides? Well, mostly it's because they believe it will save more crops from insects, weeds and disease. But that's not true: before the 1950s, farmers lost about a third of their crops each year, and today, with over 21,000 pesticide products to choose from and pesticide costs exceeding \$4 billion a year, farmers still lose the same – one third of their crops!

So what can you do?

Be an Aware Consumer: Be aware of the high toxicity levels of non-organic fruits and vegetables. Remember that pesticides can disrupt the endocrine system and be carcinogenic as well. Know, for example, that the FDA detected 30 different pesticides on the strawberries they sampled over a two year period; apples had 36 pesticides.

Make Eating Organic Produce a Habit: Go to Whole Foods, The Good Earth, or other health food markets, or buy at local farmers markets (ask your friends or go on the Web to: <http://www.cafarmersmarkets.com/findMarkets> for a full directory. Be sure you understand the vocabulary in this game: "conventional" means pesticides were used; "Free range" or "free-roaming" or "all natural" are meaningless. "Organic" means 95% of the product contains no pesticides; "100% Organic" means none of the product contains any pesticides. By the way, if "organic" prices frighten you, you might try planting your own garden, or buy a share in a nearby community farm (to find one, go to www.sare.com).

Begin with the foods that you and your family are consuming in the greatest quantities. For kids, consider switching to organic baby food, strawberries, rice, milk, bananas, peanut butter and apples.

Avoid giving children large amounts of the foods with the highest toxicity scores: Since their immune systems are more susceptible to the adverse effects of pesticides, it is especially important to make sure that your children eat as many natural and organic foods as possible. The Agricultural Department's list of 12 (see above) can be supplemented with recommendations by Consumers Union (the non-profit arm of Consumer Reports) which urges that you also take special care to buy organic **Pears**, (both fresh and in baby food), **Winter Squash**, (an insecticide was present that exceeded the safe daily limit for a young child in two-thirds of positive samples), **Raspberries, Potatoes** (pesticide use on potatoes is growing, CU warns) and **Tomatoes**.

Maybe as we become better informed and more aware of what we eat, we can pass this information along to our children and the good stuff won't seem so "weird."

*The term "organic" refers to food that is grown and processed in a practical, ecological partnership with nature, without the use of

synthetic pesticides, fertilizers or herbicides. Organic foods are minimally processed with no artificial ingredients, preservatives or irradiation. And they taste better! Produce is sent to market as close to harvest as possible and may have suffered less nutritional loss by the time you eat it.

Beth Greer has helped thousands of people see possibilities and feel empowered to make changes in their lives through her role as former President of *The Learning Annex*, a nationally renowned alternative adult education school. She has lived through the process of discovering a tumor, then successfully shrinking it away without drugs or surgery, using alternative methods of healing. She lives in Mill Valley with her husband and 8-year-old daughter. If you have any questions or comments you can contact her at: supernaturalmom2@aol.com.