

# Safer Food



## Consumer Guide for Action

It's bizarre that the produce manager is more important to my children's health than the pediatrician. - Meryl Streep

Healthy food is a building block of a healthy body. Unfortunately, today's food can play host to a wide array of chemicals that can impair our health. Some chemicals are put in our food intentionally, like preservatives, additives and colorings. Others end up in our food as residues from using pesticides, antibiotics or chemicals in packaging. Use the following tips and resources to help you make healthy decisions at the grocery store and in your kitchen.

**Eat a balanced, varied diet.** Regardless of possible chemical contaminants, a diet high in fresh produce and whole grains and low in fats and sugars builds a healthy body that is more able to fight off the ill effects of environmental toxins.

**Buy certified organically grown food whenever possible.** If you cannot afford to buy all organic, try to at least purchase the organic options of what your child eats most. In addition, some conventionally grown foods typically have fewer pesticides. Use the following table to help you find which fruits and vegetables are safer.

Highest pesticide residues buy these organically grown		Lowest pesticide residues safer non-organic options	
Fruits	Vegetables	Fruits	Vegetables
Apples	Bell Peppers	Apple juice	Asparagus
Cherries	Carrots	Bananas	Avocado
Grapes, imported	Celery	Kiwi Fruit	Broccoli
Nectarines	Green beans	Mangoes	Cabbage
Peaches	Hot peppers	Orange juice	Cauliflower
Pears	Potatoes	Papaya	Corn, sweet
Red Raspberries	Spinach	Peaches, canned	Onions
Strawberries		Pineapples	Peas, sweet
		Plums	
		Tangerines	

**Eat low fat, organic and antibiotic-free meat and dairy products.** Cancer causing chemicals like dioxins and PCBs accumulate in fatty foods, so eat low fat dairy and meats, and cut away any fat that can be trimmed before cooking. Purchase dairy and meat that has been raised antibiotic-free. Large factory farms routinely use antibiotics as feed additives for livestock and poultry, not to treat disease, but to compensate for crowded, stressful, unsanitary conditions. The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates that 70% of all antibiotics in the U.S. are used as feed additives for pigs, poultry and cattle. Antibiotic overuse in food animals increases antibiotic resistance, and can contribute to food contaminated with drug-resistant, disease-causing bacteria, as well as possible air, water and soil contamination.

**Be aware of fish consumption guidelines.** Mercury, PCBs and other contaminants are common in some fish. These toxins can damage the developing brains of fetuses and young children. You can reduce exposure to these toxins by eating fish with lower levels of mercury and learning how to cut the fat away from fish that contain PCBs and other fat-loving toxins. (Mercury is found in the muscle.) Serve children “chunk light” tuna, which has lower mercury and limit to a half a can per week.

**Buy dairy products from animals raised without the use of rBGH or rBST.**

The health effects of recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) have not been widely tested for long-term health consequences. What we do know is that milk from rBGH treated cows may contain the residues of up to 80 different drugs. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) admits that the use of rBGH in cows may lead to increased amounts of pus and bacteria in milk and has released studies showing that milk from rBGH-treated cows could have more saturated fat and less protein than regular milk. (Organic Consumer’s Association’s consumer warning on rBGH dairy. [www.organicconsumers.org/text5.html](http://www.organicconsumers.org/text5.html))

**Avoid microwaving food in plastic.** When plastic is heated chemicals leach from them into food. Even the plastics industry recommends that plastic wrap not touch food when heating it.

**Store food in safe containers.** Store food in glass or ceramic. If you do use plastic, look for the recycling symbol and use only those numbered 1, 2, 4, or 5 for food storage.

**Choose minimally processed and packaged foods.** A typical highly processed “food product” may contain little natural food and be high in fat, salt, sugar, preservatives, artificial flavors and food colorings.

**Prepare your own meals from scratch.** Home cooking is healthier and more nutritious because you start with fresh ingredients. Get creative and involve the whole family in the process and you’ll also be helping teach your children healthy eating habits for life.



**Shopper’s Guide to Pesticides in Produce-** [www.foodnews.org](http://www.foodnews.org)  
**Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy -**

Smart Produce Guide ([www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=37512](http://www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=37512)),  
Smart Meat and Dairy Guide ([www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=72846](http://www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=72846)),  
Eat Well Guide ([www.eatwellguide.org](http://www.eatwellguide.org))

Smart Fish Calculator ([www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/fishcalculator/index.cfm](http://www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/fishcalculator/index.cfm))  
Smart Fish Guide ([www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=37456](http://www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=37456))

**Organics Directory –** Organic Consumers Association - [www.organicconsumers.org/purelink.html](http://www.organicconsumers.org/purelink.html)

**Potential Public Health Impacts Of The Use Of Recombinant Bovine Somatotropin In Dairy Production –**  
Consumers Union - [www.consumersunion.org/food/bgh-codex.htm](http://www.consumersunion.org/food/bgh-codex.htm)

**Food and Farm Connections –** Land Stewardship Project – Buy food from Minnesota’s local farmers -  
<http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html>

Eating better at home is one step we can take to protect health. We can also make it a priority in our communities.

- **Use the tools on our website to get your office, school or clinic to offer healthier foods.**
- **Tell businesses that you want them to sell safe alternatives.**

Contact us to find out more and to join us on the path to a better future.

Call 612-870-3458 or log on to

**[www.HealthyLegacy.org](http://www.HealthyLegacy.org)**

# Healthy Legacy

Healthy people, safe communities,  
a clean environment and a thriving economy.



Coordinated by: Arc Greater Twin Cities, Clean Water Action Alliance, Environmental Justice Advocates of MN, Indigenous Environmental Network, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Learning Disabilities Association of MN, Minnesota Nurses Association and Women’s Environmental Institute