



Creating Healthy Environments for Children at Home

Provide Healthy Food

Increasingly, researchers are discovering some unappetizing facts about our food. It can be contaminated with potentially harmful pesticides, and industrial pollutants. Even trace amounts of a chemical, as found in food, may harm children. Because of their small body sizes, a chemical can impact children more so than adults, especially since kids eat proportionately more, pound-for-pound, than adults. And infants and children have immature organs that can't eliminate toxins as easily. These toxins can interfere with normal growth and can even set the stage for diseases later in life.

Easy Steps

Buy certified organically grown food whenever possible. If you cannot afford to buy all organic, purchase, at least, 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	

Aim for a balanced, low-fat diet with lots of fruits, vegetables and grains.

A balanced diet keeps children in tip-top shape so their bodies remove toxins as efficiently as possible and their organs and brain develop normally.

Reduce consumption of animal foods and choose low-fat versions. Some of the most toxic food contaminants accumulate in meats, fish, eggs and dairy products, especially those that are high in fat. You need not abandon these foods altogether, especially since they contain essential nutrients. In preparing and cooking:

- Trim all fats and skin on meats.





- Broil meats and fish so that the fats drain away from the meat. Avoid frying, which will lock in the contaminants.

Choose fish carefully. Obtain local fish consumption advisories for mercury, PCBs or other toxins by checking your state's consumption advisory. You can also reduce exposure to these toxins by 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.

Wash all fruits and vegetables well and peel them to remove surface chemicals.

Breastfeed your infant as long as possible. While breast milk, like the rest of our bodies, has become increasingly polluted, experts agree that it is the healthiest thing to feed your baby. The American Academy of Pediatrics Policy on Breastfeeding recommends that infants be breastfed for at least one year.

Buy dairy products from animals raised without the use of recombinant synthetic bovine growth hormone (rBGH or rBST). The 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)

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.

Additional Resources:

Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce- Download the Environmental Working Group's wallet guide to produce based on the results of more than 100,000 tests for pesticides on produce collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration between 1992 and 2001- www.foodnews.org

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - Smart Produce Guide(pdf)

www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=37512

Smart Meat and Dairy Guide(pdf) www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=72846

Smart Fish Guide(pdf) www.environmentalobservatory.org/library.cfm?refID=37456

Smart Fish Calculator – On-line tool for calculating how much fish is safe to consume based on their body weight. www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/fishcalculator/index.cfm





Organics Directory – Organic Consumers Association - www.organicconsumers.org/purelink.html

Eat Well Guide – On-line database for finding healthy meat, poultry and dairy near you. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - www.eatwellguide.org/

Potential Public Health Impacts Of The Use Of Recombinant Bovine Somatotropin In Dairy Production – Consumers Union - www.consumersunion.org/food/bgh-codex.htm

