

Weigh up the evidence - Organic food will give you less

There's a growing body of evidence that lets consumers know it's also what they're not eating that makes organic an attractive option.

"There's a lot of information out there about what certain food additives might do - organic simply makes the risk negligible," says BFA spokesperson and nutritionist Shane Heaton. Here's a recap on some of the most recent:

Organic evidence timeline:

1. Last week, American researchers announced artificial sweeteners could disrupt the body's natural ability to connect sweet taste and viscosity to high caloric content – leading to unwitting weight gain (1).

In testing, animals that were exposed to artificial sweeteners failed to form an accurate link between taste and calories and when later exposed to chocolate, ate more.

Organic processing prohibits the use of sugar substitutes and aspartame. Phosphoric acid - a highly acidic ingredient in cola drinks, used to offset the extreme sweetness - is also banned.

2. Last September a study from the University of Southampton found that additives, preservatives and flavourings in common food and beverages adversely affected the behaviour of children (2).

Researchers found "clear evidence" that 3-year-old and 8-9-year-old children exposed to mixtures of artificial food colours and benzoate preservatives displayed significantly more hyperactive tendencies (*increased movement, impulsivity and inattention*).

Organic foods contain no artificial additives, preservatives or flavourings.

3. Last November, a World Cancer Research Report stated there is a 'convincing link' between high levels of nitrites and other preservatives in processed meat and cancer in the colon and rectum; two key organs of the digestive system (3).

Sodium Nitrite is barred from use in the processing of organic meat. It is commonly used for preservation and presentation purposes in non-organic products.

4. Concerns over possible connections between pesticide's and breast cancer have recently re-surfaced in Australia (4).

There is debate over the link between organochlorine insecticides *dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT)* and *dieldrin* in the incidence of or mortality due to breast cancer.

Research that does not support the link nevertheless states widespread past use of *DDT* sees residues of its metabolite *DDE* detected frequently in foods, especially: **animal and dairy products, fish, root vegetables, and legumes** (5).

Organic production systems ban the use of pesticides and the organic certification process takes a minimum three years, ensuring the levels of remaining residues on organic farms are within 10 per cent of maximum residue levels (MRLs) set by government authorities.

The BFA has a vision for the organic industry in Australia - to grow organic food sales to 10 per cent of the food market in Australia by 2020. Assurance of food origin and inputs is one good reason to buy organic and assist the organic industry to achieve its goal. More information is available at http://www.bfa.com.au/index.asp?Sec_ID=260.

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- (1) Data: Purdue University: <http://www.purdue.edu/UNS/html4ever/2004/040629.Swithers.research.html>
- (2) Data: University of Southampton: http://www.soton.ac.uk/mediacentre/news/2007/sep/07_99.shtml
- (3) Data: World Cancer Research Report: <http://www.dietandcancerreport.org/?p=ER>
- (4) Data: ABC Breast cancer and pesticide probe <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/02/22/2169576.htm>
Data: Snedeker, S: Pesticides and Breast Cancer Risk: A Review of DDT, DDE, and Dieldrin <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1637846>
- (5) Data: Snedeker, S: Pesticides and Breast Cancer Risk: A Review of DDT, DDE, and Dieldrin <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1637846>



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