

Organic Food is Not Healthier, Say Stanford Researchers

When it Comes to Nutrition, Organic Meats, Produce and Dairy are No Better

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A new large-scale study from Stanford University finds that when it comes to nutrition, organic foods, such as meat, dairy, and produce, may not be worth the extra cash. **While organics come at a premium, researchers say they are no healthier and not significantly safer than conventional foods and produce grown with pesticides.**

Organic foods can cost as much as a third more than conventional alternatives, with consumers shelling out the extra cash with the hopes of purchasing healthier, more nutrient-dense food.

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In a review of thousands of papers, the researchers found that there was also no guarantee organic food would be pesticide-free, though it did have 30 percent lower levels compared to conventional products. Yet despite this, the review yielded scant evidence that conventional foods posed greater health risks than organic products. In addition, the researchers found that the pesticide levels of all foods generally fell within the allowable safety limits. Two studies of children consuming organic and conventional diets did find lower levels of pesticide residues in the urine of children on organic diets, though the significance of these findings on child health is unclear, noted the researchers.

The results of the study -- the largest review of its kind comparing organic to conventional foods -- were published September 4 in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

"Some believe that organic food is always healthier and more nutritious," states co-researcher Crystal Smith-Spangler at Stanford's School of Medicine. "We were a little surprised that we didn't find that."

A separate new study from Oxford University in the UK found that organic farming may not be better for the environment either. The researchers cited that organic products such as milk, cereals, and pork generate higher greenhouse gas emissions than their conventional counterparts. However, organic beef produced lower emissions. That study was published online September 4 in the Journal of Environmental Management.

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