

## SHOULD YOU SPEND MONEY ON ORGANIC PRODUCE?



*by Bernadell Larson, HCMG*

You have probably looked at the price of organic produce versus “conventional” produce and wondered if the extra price was worth the difference.

One of the reasons people choose organic may be to eliminate or reduce their exposure to pesticides used in commercial farming operations. There is a growing consensus among scientists that small doses of pesticides and other chemicals can cause lasting damage to human health, especially during fetal development and early childhood. Pesticides accumulate in the body’s tissues. Scientists now know enough about the long-term consequences of ingesting the chemicals used in pesticides to advise that we minimize our consumption of them.

Rinsing the produce prior to eating or preparation does reduce the residual pesticide exposure but does not eliminate it. Peeling helps, but you lose valuable nutrients when you remove the skin. The best thing to do is eat a varied diet, rinse all produce and buy truly organic.

Between 2000 and 2008, The U. S. Department of Agriculture and the U. S. Food and Drug Administration collected data from nearly 96,000 tests for pesticide residues on produce. The Environmental Working Group, a non-profit organization created to use public information to protect public health and the environment, analyzed the data and developed a list of “The Clean 15” and “The Dirty Dozen.” The EWG research found that people who eat five fruits and vegetables a day from the Dirty Dozen consume an average of 10 pesticides a days, but those who eat from the Clean 15 conventionally grown fruits and vegetables ingest fewer than two pesticides a day.

If you are trying to manage your grocery bill, think about buying organic for the produce on the Dirty Dozen list and buying conventionally grown

| DIRTY DOZEN       | CLEAN 15       |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Celery            | Onions         |
| Peaches           | Avocados       |
| Strawberries      | Sweet Corn     |
| Apples            | Pineapple      |
| Blueberries       | Mangos         |
| Nectarines        | Sweet Peas     |
| Bell Peppers      | Asparagus      |
| Spinach           | Kiwi           |
| Cherries          | Cabbage        |
| Kale/Collard      | Eggplant       |
| Potatoes          | Cantaloupe     |
| Grapes (imported) | Watermelon     |
|                   | Grapefruit     |
|                   | Sweet Potato   |
|                   | Honeydew Melon |