

Avoid These 7 Foods and be Healthier

Posted by: [Dr. Mercola](#)

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1. Canned Tomatoes

The expert: Fredrick vom Saal, PhD, an endocrinologist at the University of Missouri who studies bisphenol-A

The resin linings of tin cans contain bisphenol-A, a synthetic estrogen that has been linked to ailments ranging from reproductive problems to heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Acidity -- a prominent characteristic of tomatoes -- causes BPA to leach into your food.

2. Corn-Fed Beef

The expert: Joel Salatin, co-owner of Polyface Farms and author of books on sustainable farming

Cattle were designed to eat grass, not grains. But farmers today feed their animals corn and soybeans, which fatten up the animals faster for slaughter. A recent comprehensive study found that compared with corn-fed beef, grass-fed beef is higher in beta-carotene, vitamin E, omega-3s, conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), calcium, magnesium, and potassium.

3. Microwave Popcorn

The expert: Olga Naidenko, PhD, a senior scientist for the Environmental Working Group

Chemicals, including perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), in the lining of the bag, are part of a class of compounds that may be linked to infertility in humans. In animal testing, the chemicals cause liver, testicular, and pancreatic cancer. Studies show that microwaving causes the chemicals to vaporize -- and migrate into your popcorn.

4. Nonorganic Potatoes

The expert: Jeffrey Moyer, chair of the National Organic Standards Board

Root vegetables absorb herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides that wind up in soil. In the case of potatoes they're treated with fungicides during the growing season, then sprayed with herbicides to kill off the fibrous vines before harvesting. After they're dug up, the potatoes are treated yet again to prevent them from sprouting.

5. Farmed Salmon

The expert: David Carpenter, MD, director of the Institute for Health and the Environment at the University at Albany

Nature didn't intend for salmon to be crammed into pens and fed soy, poultry litter, and hydrolyzed chicken feathers. As a result, farmed salmon is lower in vitamin D and higher in contaminants,

including carcinogens, PCBs, brominated flame retardants, and pesticides such as dioxin and DDT.

6. Milk Produced with Artificial Hormones

The expert: Rick North, project director of the Campaign for Safe Food at the Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

Milk producers treat their dairy cattle with recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH or rBST, as it is also known) to boost milk production. But rBGH also increases udder infections and even pus in the milk. It also leads to higher levels of a hormone called insulin-like growth factor in milk. In people, high levels of IGF-1 may contribute to breast, prostate, and colon cancers.

7. Conventional Apples

The expert: Mark Kastel, codirector of the Cornucopia Institute

If fall fruits held a "most doused in pesticides contest," apples would win. And increasing numbers of studies are starting to link a higher body burden of pesticides with Parkinson's disease.

Sources:

» [Yahoo Shine November 24, 2009](#)

Dr. Mercola's Comments:

This is one of the best "foods to avoid" lists I've seen come out of the mainstream media. It is very rare when this happens, but I agree with every food on this list.

The reality is that most food nowadays is far from pure. Pesticide residues have been detected in 50 percent to 95 percent of all commercially grown U.S. foods, and that is only one type of toxin.

Babies are actually born toxic due to the toxic load of their mothers, some of which comes from dietary contaminants and food additives. One study by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) found that [blood samples from newborns contained an average of 287 toxins](#), including mercury, fire retardants, pesticides, and Teflon chemicals!

The list above is a great starting point to cleaning up your diet, but focusing on organically grown, biodynamic whole foods is really the key to success here.

I want to expand on some of the toxic foods mentioned above, as well as add a few more to the list, so you can significantly reduce your exposure to toxins in the foods you eat.

Why Fresh is Better Than Canned

Many leading brands of canned foods contain BPA -- a toxic chemical linked to reproductive abnormalities, neurological effects, heightened risk of breast and prostate cancers, diabetes, heart disease and other serious health problems.

According to Consumer Reports' testing, just a couple of servings of canned food can [exceed the safety limits for daily BPA exposure](#) for children.

The current US federal guidelines put the daily upper limit of "safe" exposure at 50 micrograms of BPA per kilogram of body weight. You should know, however, that even low-level exposure to BPA can be hazardous to your health, and Consumer Reports' testing found that eating popular canned foods may expose you to excessive amounts of BPA:

- Del Monte Fresh Cut Green Beans had BPA levels ranging from 35.9 ppb to as much as 191 ppb
- Progresso Vegetable Soup had BPA levels ranging from 67 to 134 ppb
- Campbell's Condensed Chicken Noodle Soup had BPA levels ranging from 54.5 to 102 ppb

So, ideally avoid canned foods entirely and stick to fresh fruits and vegetables, or switch over to brands that use glass containers instead.

Grass-Fed is the Healthy Choice for Beef

Grass-fed beef is vastly superior to grain-fed beef, and in fact it's the clear beef of choice you should be eating. It is far more important to choose grass-fed than to choose organic, as most grass-fed beef are also organic

Not only is it raised in a more sustainable way for the environment and a more humane way for the animal, but it's the superior choice for your health.

Grass-fed beef, for instance, is lower in fat than regular beef and, more importantly, contains higher amounts of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), a fatty acid. Grass-fed animals have from three to five times more CLA than grain-fed animals.

CLA has been making headlines for its extreme health benefits, which include:

- [Fighting cancer](#) and [diabetes](#)
- Helping you [lose weight](#)
- Increasing your metabolic rate, a positive benefit for promoting normal thyroid function
- Helping you maintain normal cholesterol and triglyceride levels
- Enhancing your immune system

Keep in mind that grass-fed meat is almost always preferable to certified organic meat also because most organic beef is fed organic corn, which is what causes the myriad of health problems associated with eating beef. If you can find organic, grass-fed meat, that would be ideal.

What You Need to Know About Milk

I strongly recommend you avoid milk that has the added growth hormone rBGH.

Samuel Epstein, MD, a scientist at the University of Illinois School of Public Health, is one of the top experts on cancer prevention, and he has been speaking out against rBGH in milk, the so-called “crack for cows,” for years.

For starters, Dr. Epstein points out that rBGH milk is “supercharged with high levels of a natural growth factor (IGF-1), excess levels of which have been incriminated as major causes of breast, colon, and prostate cancers.”

But that’s not all.

"This milk is qualitatively and quantitatively different from natural milk," states Dr. Epstein. "In addition to the issue of increased IGF-1 levels, these differences include:

- Contamination of milk by the GM hormone rBGH
- Contamination by pus and antibiotics resulting from the high incidence of mastitis in rBGH-injected cows
- Contamination with illegal antibiotics and drugs used to treat mastitis and other rBGH-induced disease
- Increased concentration of the thyroid hormone enzyme thyroxin-5'-monodeiodinase
- Increased concentration of long-chain and decreased concentration of short-chain fatty acids
- A reduction in levels of the milk protein casein."

You very well may be drinking rBGH milk and not know it, as no labels are required. This is despite the fact that nearly every American wants it labeled, but the government, as usual, bowed to industry lobbyists and, amazingly, does not require this on the label.

However, as increasing numbers of people and dairies choose to avoid rBGH, you can find labels that say “rBGH-free” or a similar variation. Organic milk is also rBGH-free.

This is certainly preferable to milk that contains this dangerous hormone ... but I still don’t recommend drinking any milk, organic or otherwise, that is [pasteurized](#).

You can avoid both the risks of rBGH and pasteurization by [only drinking raw milk](#) that comes from a small farmer you know and trust. This is the only way to drink milk if you’re interested in protecting your health.

The Most Important Foods to Buy Organic

Most fruits and vegetables contain [unacceptable and unsafe levels of pesticides](#), so it’s a wise choice to buy organic produce as often as you can.

However, if you need to pick and choose which foods to buy organic, the most important foods to buy organic are animal products -- not produce. This is because animal foods, which are raised on pesticide-laced feed, tend to have higher concentrations of pesticides.

Non-organic meats have up to five times more pesticides than non-organic vegetables.

Non-organic butter can have up to 20 times as many pesticides as non-organic vegetables.

So when prioritizing your purchases, look for organic meats, eggs and dairy products before anything else.

There is one exception to this rule, and that is you may be better off choosing fresh local foods over organic foods. Often, locally grown foods are raised according to organic standards at a more affordable price.

Is Farmed Salmon the Only Seafood to Avoid?

Farmed salmon is among the [worst seafood choices out there](#), as numerous studies show the salmon contain toxins and cancer-causing pollutants. Farmed salmon typically have at least 10 times more cancer-causing persistent organic pollutants than their wild counterparts.

That said, I do not agree that farmed salmon is the only fish you need to stay away from.

A recent study from the U.S. Geological Survey detected [mercury in every fish sampled](#) from nearly 300 U.S. streams. Among them, 27 percent contained mercury at levels that equaled or exceeded the U.S. EPA's criterion for the protection of human health, and more than two-thirds exceeded mercury safety levels for fish-eating mammals like mink and otters.

Therefore, I do not recommend eating any fish -- whether farm-raised or from an ocean, lake, river or stream -- unless you have lab results in your hand that can attest to its purity.

There are still some safe areas out there, such as in certain pristine waters in Alaska, but it will take some searching on your end to seek them out. The ONLY safe fish I have discovered so far is [Vital Choice wild red salmon](#), which remains the only source of fish I'll eat.

Eating smaller fish, like anchovies and sardines, is also an option, as their small size makes them far less likely to be contaminated.

An important point to remember if you're not eating fish is that your body still has a requirement for omega-3 fats. Fortunately, you can easily meet your omega-3 needs by taking a [high-quality krill oil supplement](#), instead of risking your health by eating contaminated fish.

Another Food to Avoid: Unfermented Soy

This one did not make the above list, but it's one I would definitely add.

Any soy that is unfermented -- soy milk, tofu, soybean oil, soy burgers, and all the other processed soy products out there all belong to this category -- is not a health food and in fact is not a food I would advise eating at all. This is true whether it is "organic" or not.

Soy infant formula is also on this list and is one of the [absolute worst foods you can give your baby](#).

Unfermented soy products have been linked to everything from reproductive disorders and infertility to cancer and heart disease.

Further, unfermented soy contains isoflavones that are clearly associated with reduced thyroid function. Eating unfermented soy products is likely the single largest cause of [hypothyroidism](#) in women.

Another major problem with unfermented soy is that it contains natural toxins known as “antinutrients.” This includes a large quantity of inhibitors that deter your enzymes needed for protein digestion.

While a small amount of these antinutrients would likely not be a problem, the amount of soy that many Americans are now eating (and drinking in the form of soy milk) is quite significant.

The result of consuming too many of soy’s antinutrients is extensive gastric distress and chronic deficiencies in amino acid uptake, which can result in pancreatic impairment and cancer.

For more details on soy foods, including the fermented varieties that can actually be healthy, please read [Why This Type of Soy is Better](#).

Guidelines for Healthy Food

Whatever food you’re looking to eat, whether imported organic or locally grown, from either your local supermarket or a farmer’s market, here are the signs of a high-quality, healthy food:

- 1.It’s grown without pesticides and chemical fertilizers (organic foods fit this description, but so do some non-organic foods)
- 2.It’s not genetically modified
- 3.It contains no added growth hormones, antibiotics, or other drugs
- 4.It does not contain artificial anything, nor any preservatives
- 5.It is fresh (if you have to choose between wilted organic produce or fresh conventional produce, the latter may be the better option)
- 6.It did not come from a factory farm
- 7.It is grown with the laws of nature in mind (meaning animals are fed their native diets, not a mix of grains and animal byproducts, and have free-range access to the outdoors)
- 8.It is grown in a sustainable way (using minimal amounts of water, protecting the soil from burnout, and turning animal wastes into natural fertilizers instead of environmental pollutants)

If the food meets these criteria, it is likely a good choice. Most often, the best place to find these foods is from a [sustainable agricultural group in your area](#). You can also review my [free nutrition plan](#) to get started on a healthy eating program today.

Related Links:

- » **The Five Absolute Worst Foods You Can Eat**
- » **Ten Worst Breakfast Cereals**
- » **12 Food Additives to Avoid**

Reference website: <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2009/12/29/The-7-Foods-Experts-Wont-Eat.aspx>