

The Dirty Dozen and Clean 15

Grocery Shopping

The choices you make at the grocery store can help keep you healthy. It is important to choose a variety of healthful foods. This includes plenty of colorful fruits and vegetables.

But what about organic? When you are comparing an organic apple to a nonorganic (conventionally grown) apple, which should you choose?

The Dirty Dozen and Clean 15

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) has created lists called the “Dirty 12” and “Clean 15” to help you decide which fruits and vegetables are most important to buy organic.

In general, it is important to buy organic when:

- you eat the peel
- the food is difficult to clean well.
This includes fruits and vegetables that have:
 - a large surface area such as leafy greens
 - bumps or grooves such as strawberries.

If you eat a certain fruit or vegetable every day (for example, a grapefruit at breakfast every day), it is a good idea to choose the organic option for that food too.



The 12 most important (left) and 15 least important (right) fruits and vegetables to buy organic. Images used with permission by the Environmental Working Group (EWG).

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Tips for Grocery Shopping

As you grocery shop, here are some other tips to help you choose healthful options for your cart.

1. Look for foods with five ingredients or less. Better yet, look for foods without a packaging or a nutrition label!
2. If sugar is one of the first five ingredients listed on the label, do not buy it.

Did You Know?

Sugar can be “hidden” in foods. Look at the food label for words that include “sugar” or “-ose” at the end of a word. These words include:

- brown sugar, powdered sugar, invert sugar, white
- granulated sugar, raw sugar
- dextrose, fructose, lactose, sucrose
- corn syrup
- honey
- maple syrup
- molasses, nectars.

3. If you cannot pronounce an ingredient or do not know what one (or more) of the ingredients is, do not buy that food.

Tip

Ask yourself: Can you make the same food at home with the ingredients listed on the label? If you cannot, it is probably a good idea to choose another option.

4. Marketing can be misleading!
If you have seen ads for a food, think about the messaging.
 - What is the ad telling you?
 - Is the ad selling you happiness or fun, or using humor “reel you in?”If the food is trying to sell you something other than taste, it is distracting you from the food itself. Do not buy it.
5. Never go grocery shopping hungry!
It is easy to put more in your cart when everything looks good. Plan your shopping trip for after you have eaten or pack a snack to enjoy on your way to the store.



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For More Information

Call your health care provider or dietitian for more information about buying organic or nonorganic foods.