

New Study Shows Children Should Eat Organic to Reduce Pesticide Levels

For a long time, we have known that organophosphorus (OP) pesticides, like chlorpyrifos and diazinon, are bad for humans, as well as pests. Almost two decades ago, they began to be phased out for residential use due to the risks. Unfortunately, they're still heavily utilized in agriculture, and researchers in California decided to identify how much of these, and other, harmful pesticides, children are actually ingesting.

The Study Focused on Low-Income Children in Urban and Agricultural Areas

If it feels like you've already heard this information, you probably have, but not quite in this way. Previous studies have focused on pesticide levels of children in non-agricultural and suburban areas. As most of us know, these studies have shown that children have lower levels of pesticides when they go organic. The difference with this new study is that children in urban and agricultural areas are exposed to more pesticides in the environment, especially those in low-income families. Therefore, the question was not whether organic diets reduce pesticide levels- we know that they do, but whether children who are exposed to environmental pesticides have reduced levels when they go organic as well. For this reason, the study included participants from the Fruitvale area of Oakland, California, an urban area, and also from Salinas, California, a largely agricultural region.

Children Between the Ages of Three and Six were Analyzed

The study lasted only 16 days, but the results were incredibly apparent. For the first four days, 40 kids between the ages of three and six ate their normal diet, were monitored by an in-home personal trainer before or after extracurricular activities. They then ate an organic diet for seven days and switched back to their regular diet for the remainder of the study. Urine samples were collected every day of the study, and scientists analyzed the samples for pesticide residue and markers.

The Amount of Two Pesticides Reduced By 50% on an Organic Diet

The study revealed that residue for two specific pesticides was cut in half when children went on an organic diet. Levels of a common herbicide also dropped by about one-fourth. Asa Bradman, an author of the study and Associate Director of the Center for Environmental Research and Children's Health at the University of California, Berkeley, acknowledges, "There's evidence that diet is one route of exposure to pesticides, and you can reduce your exposure by choosing organic food." However, she cautions people not to cut regular fruits and vegetables out of their diet, because they both provide health benefits.

Sadly, Levels of Three of the Most-Common Pesticides Did Not Decline

The study showed that pesticides commonly used in residential applications did not decline. So although there is benefit in going organic, it's only part of the solution to an overall problem. However, the study did uncover another remarkable

find. Because food diaries were also kept, researchers noted that kids ate more healthy grains and produce when they were on the organic diet. In other words, choosing to stick with an organic diet can have other unexpected health benefits.

Pesticides are Linked to Childhood Cancer and Low IQ, Among Other Issues

There is a laundry list of issues that scientists have linked to pesticides. Recently, a study published in the October issue of *Pediatrics* linked pesticides with a higher risk of developing leukemia and lymphoma. Though that particular study focused on children who were exposed to insecticides indoors, a 47% and 43% increase in cancer rates were noted, respectively. Chensheng Lu, of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, who headed up the study, said that instances of other cancers, like bladder and prostate, may also increase with exposure to insecticides. Additional studies link pesticides to low IQ and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, as well as minor conditions like nausea, skin irritation, and headaches. The same issue of *Pediatrics* that features this study also covers the story of a seven-month-old victim of SIDS. Analysis of her brain tissue revealed high levels of a pesticide known as DBNP, which she may have been exposed to two weeks prior to her death when her father sprayed the house for flies.

These cases are not rare. Pesticide use can cause acute health issues, and the compounds can build up over time undetected, resulting in long-term health consequences. Keeping children on an organic diet is an essential part of limiting exposure to dangerous and deadly chemicals. However, it's also clear that parents should take steps to limit environmental exposure as well.

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