

Doctor Winters On Why Organic Food Might Reduce Cancer Risk

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By [Nasha Winters](#)

Doctor Nasha Winters is a world-renowned specialist in integrative oncology. With years of research under her belt and a book titled “The Metabolic Approach to Cancer,” In this article, she discusses the reasons as to why organic food is better than conventional food by digging into what it means for a food to be considered truly organic. Learn about why organic foods are better for you and why eating organic food may help reduce your cancer risk.

We’ve all heard a lot about organic food and that it’s better for you. You might be wondering if these are just marketing claims or if there is scientific basis or research on organic foods. In this article, I explain why I believe organic foods are better and recommend that you use organic whenever you can. This is partly because agricultural practices have changed over the years, whole and healthy foods (like meat, milk, and oats) have become toxins. Thus, we need to turn to organic foods if we want to keep our body safe from potentially harmful substances that can lead to life-threatening conditions, including [cancer](#). Let me explain:

To be classified organic, foods must meet strict guidelines established by the USDA

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) sets strict [guidelines for organic food](#) production. Food can not be labeled organic unless they meet these requirements. By simply looking at the strict requirements, we are able to see how organic food is best.

1. No GMOs

When a food is genetically engineered (GMO), it means that the food has undergone the process of transferring genetic information from one species to another. Foods are genetically engineered so that they can obtain a certain trait, a common one being a larger size. For example, soy has been genetically engineered to tolerate the herbicide glyphosate, and corn has been engineered to produce its own insecticide.

One major concern about GMOs is that they have led to a dramatic spike in the use of herbicides like glyphosate, which the International Association of Cancer Research classifies as a probable human carcinogen. Safety research on GMO crops is limited, though, and experts worry that there could surely be other [health hazards](#) that have not yet been explored.

2. No Ionizing Radiation

[Ionizing radiation](#) is used on conventional spices, meats, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables in order to preserve them and extend their shelf life. While the process does not cause the products to be radioactive, and the US Food and Drug Administration claims irradiated food is safe, many organic proponents disagree. Indeed, the [Center for Food Safety](#) published a report highlighting research with contradicting results, suggesting that ionizing radiation can indeed compromise the quality of food.

3. No Sewage Sludge

Yes, you read that correctly. Conventional farming practices actually permit farmers to apply sewage sludge to their fields. The problem, which is no surprise, is that sewage can introduce contaminants to the soil. A study of barley and sorghum fields where sewage sludge had been applied for four years found that the sludge had contaminated the soil with [heavy metals](#), like cadmium and lead, which can have adverse effects on our health.

4. Only approved substances

The USDA has an extensive list of [substances that are permitted](#) for growing organic crops and raising animals for producing organic dairy or meat. The goal is only to use substances that will not harm the

environment or affect the food's nutritional value. Synthetic herbicides, pesticides, and ash from burning manure are examples of substances that are prohibited in organic agriculture.

5. Only specific non-organic ingredients may be used

Processed foods that are labeled as organic, like cookies, crackers, and flavored yogurt, are allowed to have some ingredients that are not organic. This does not mean this is a free-for-all. Only specific, explicitly listed [added ingredients](#) are allowed. Therefore, for instance, foods that contain artificial colors, flavors, and preservatives cannot be considered organic.

Eating organic reduces your exposure to pesticides

When we pay attention to the requirements for organic foods and organic labeling, we can see why foods that are not considered organic, meaning they do not meet the legal requirements, might pose a health risk. Foods that are not grown organically have much higher residues of pesticides and herbicides. This is not only true for GMO crops – conventionally-grown non-GMO crops can also have these higher levels of residue. A recent report from the [Environmental Working Group](#) found that all samples of cereals they tested, that includes Quaker Oats and Cheerios, contained alarming levels of glyphosate, the potential human carcinogen we mentioned earlier.

Additionally, non-organic animal products are more likely to contain growth hormones, antibiotics, and heavy metals. By consuming these non-organic products, we are exposed to these [harmful substances](#). For example, arsenical medications are given to chickens that have been conventionally raised, and studies have shown that people who consume [more chicken](#) have higher urinary levels of arsenic, a harmful metalloid that could be poisonous when dangerous levels are reached.

Eating organic food might reduce the risk of cancer

This is a big one. But researchers are finding evidence that eating organic food can help reduce cancer risk. In 2018, a large, well-designed study of French adults published by the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#) (JAMA) found that eating organic foods can help reduce cancer risk. The study surveyed 68,946 men and women to determine how often they ate organic food. After following the participants for four and a half years, researchers found that those who had higher consumption of organic foods *reduced the overall risk of cancer by 25%*. Organic foods were most strongly associated with a reduced risk of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and [postmenopausal breast cancer](#).

These results were consistent with a [similar study](#) conducted in the United Kingdom that followed 623,080 middle-aged women for about nine years and found that eating more organic food was associated with a 21% reduced risk of non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

While we do not necessarily know why organic food is associated with a [lower risk of cancer](#), we do know that eating organic reduces your exposure to pesticides as discussed above. [Previous scientific studies](#) have shown that people who eat more organic foods have lower levels of pesticide residues in their urine. Additionally, a [study](#) published just this year found that the urinary concentration of pesticides increased

directly in association with the intake of pesticide-laden fruits and vegetables. And milk from cows treated with [recombinant bovine growth hormone](#) have higher levels of IGF-1, which is a growth factor shown to promote breast, prostate, colorectal, and other cancers.

The takeaway message here is that eating organic minimizes your exposure to pesticides, growth hormones, antibiotics and other substances that can threaten your health and even put you at risk for cancer. My advice that I often repeat to my clients is summed up by a magnet on my refrigerator:

“Eat organic food. Or as your grandmother called it, FOOD.”

Want to read more?

[How My Mother Survived Stage-4 Breast Cancer: An Excerpt from Dr. Josh Axe’s “Eat Dirt”](#)

[Dr. Anna’s Advice on Reducing Breast Cancer Risk Naturally and Early Detection](#)

[To Anyone Questioning If Diet Changes Can Cure Cancer. Hear My Story.](#)