

Is it Important to Feed Kids Organic Food?

(StatePoint) The nutritional choices you make for your children are crucial, setting the stage for good health and good habits for years to come. So if you've heard about the benefits of organic food, you may be wondering if it's worth the extra expense, especially if you're on a budget.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, which recently weighed in on the subject of organic food for the first time, what's most important is that children eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, lean meats, whole grains and low-fat or fat-free dairy products, whether those are conventionally or organically grown.

Organic foods do have lower levels of pesticides and drug-resistant bacteria, says Dr. Thomas K. McInerney, president of the AAP. "That may be important for kids because young children are more vulnerable to chemicals, but we simply don't have the scientific evidence to know if the difference will affect a person's health over a lifetime," says McInerney.

Both organic and conventionally grown foods have the same vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, proteins, lipids and other nutrients that are important for children's health. "If you're on a budget, don't buy the more expensive organic option if it's going to reduce your family's overall intake of healthy foods like fresh produce," advises McInerney. "It's better for kids to eat five servings of conventionally grown produce a day than for them to eat one serving of organic vegetables."

Families can also be selective in choosing particular organic foods to stretch their budget. The Environmental Working Group has created a Shopper's Guide that rates the level of pesticides in produce. Their guide indicates that conventionally grown onions, sweet corn and pineapples have relatively low pesticide rates, making them safer to



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purchase. If you can budget a few extra dollars to spend on groceries, opt for organic apples and celery, which are among the most pesticide-laden crops.

According to the AAP, organic milk is not healthier for kids than conventional milk, but parents should make sure all milk they purchase is pasteurized.

The jury is still out on the long-term health benefits of organic produce, but in the meantime keep your eyes and ears open for new information as it becomes available -- so you can make the best possible choices in the future.

You can find nutrition tips for kids on the AAP website for parents, www.healthychildren.org.

No matter the size of your budget, you can do your kids a world of good by ensuring they get at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily.