

Shopping Tips: Avoiding Pesticides, Contaminated Fish and other Chemicals.

Healing Foundations Naturopathic Clinic

Vegetable and Fruit Produce:

Buying organic is ideal and the best choice in terms of your child's health. However, due to cost and availability, it is not always practical. On average organic produce costs more per item and are subject to seasonal variability. It might be helpful for you to know that there are twelve produce, which consistently show a high level of contamination. Therefore, it is advisable to obtain these organic. On the other hand, there are twelve produce which show a lower level of contamination. It is not necessary to buy these organic if it does not fit your budget to do so. However, as with all produce, wash and dry them very well.

- **The twelve most contaminated produce items are: bell peppers, nectarines, pears, strawberries, peaches, cherries, raspberries, celery, grapes, potatoes and apples.**
- **The twelve least contaminated produce items are: asparagus, avocados, bananas, broccoli, cauliflower, kiwi, mangos, onions, papaya, pineapples, sweet peas and corn.**

Wild Fish

Given that omega-3 fats from fish oil are consistently shown to have a positive impact on brain development, learning and memory in children and that heavy metals like mercury also found in fish, show a negative impact on the nervous system, brain development, learning and memory in children, the question then arises:

How can we have our fish and eat it too?

Background:

Wild fish can accumulate mercury and other heavy metals. Mercury is a toxic heavy metal. The body can handle small amounts of mercury. Frequent exposure can cause mercury accumulation in the body. Eating fish with high levels of mercury can negatively impact brain development, nervous system, learning and memory function. Certain fish species are known to have higher mercury concentrations than others, sometimes due to polluted waters. In general, fish with a higher fat content, and large predatory fish at the top of the food chain, accumulate the most mercury and contaminants.

The most mercury-contaminated fish are:

- **Shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish.**
- Avoid these fish.

The second most mercury-contaminated group of fish is:

- **White albacore, tuna, grouper, marlin, orange roughy, bass (sea and largemouth), halibut, red snapper, Spanish mackerel, bluefish, lobster, pike, walleye.**
- Consume no more than one serving of this group every three weeks.

The less contaminated group of fish is:

- **Atlantic mackerel, haddock, salmon, trout, cod, catfish, herring, whitefish, mahi mahi and shad. Also, canned light tuna (smaller size, less fat content).**
- You can consume up to two servings per week.

The least contaminated fish are the smaller fish, such as:

- **Sardines, anchovies, and Alaskan pollock.**
- You can consume these fish abundantly.

Farmed Fish

Farmed fish contains high amounts of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). PCBs are industrial pollutants that find their way into fresh waters and oceans where they are absorbed by fish. PCB concentrations are high in the feed used for farmed fish. Potential ***health effects of PCBs include impaired memory and learning, and adverse effects on the immune, reproductive and nervous systems, especially in children.*** PCBs are also potential human carcinogens.

Disease is always a problem when fish are raised in close quarters such as in farmed fish. **Aquaculture has adopted the use of antibiotics and anti-parasitic drugs** to remedy the issue. Some of these substances pass easily into the surrounding environment and some fish antibiotics are highly toxic to humans and the environment.

The best advice is to avoid farmed fish and buy organic farmed fish or purchase wild fish only. You can also reduce PCB exposure from fish by removing the skin and visible fat.

Buying canned fish: Purchase fish packed in water or its own oil or olive oil. Avoid canned fish that says, “packed in vegetable oil”.

For local, annual fish safety updates go to: www.seachoice.org

General Shopping Tips:

Avoid most canned, packaged, processed, or chemically contaminated foods. If you use these, ***read the labels carefully*** to be sure that it is a pure food, with nothing added. Avoid anything with added sugar, glucose, fructose, flavoring, color, added starch, or any preservative. If you are not familiar with any of the listed ingredients on a label the odds are it is not healthy for you.

Remember: ***“A little of something is better than a whole lot of nothing.”***

Do the best you can. Your love and respect for yourself and your family’s health will prove to make your efforts pay off. Take it one step at a time and prioritize which actions you need to take first. With the knowledge you now have in combination with your heart’s deepest desire to have a healthier life for yourself and family, you will know in each moment the appropriate next step.

“It is true that knowledge is power. However, the application of knowledge is profound!”

-Heidi McGill B.Sc, ND

Dr. Heidi McGill (B.Sc, N.D.) holds a nutrition degree from the University of Guelph (1996) and graduated from the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine in 2004. She is the founder of Healing Foundations Naturopathic Clinic. Dr. McGill specializes in the treatment of chronic stress-related illness, including anxiety, depression and hormonal imbalance. She dedicates her passion for teaching healthy living through the use of articles and seminars related to topics that concern you. She believes that diet sets the foundation for health and its power cannot be under-estimated. Heidi has treated dozens of children and adults using the “food as medicine” principal, in order to safely and effectively establish better health and wellness in the body and mind.

