

CHILDREN AND ORGANIC DIET

by Steve Meyerowitz, “Sproutman”

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Mothers of infants and toddlers, you now have another very important job: Feed your child organic baby food. Pesticide residues on food are too concentrated for infants because of their low body weights and high metabolisms. In their “*Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children*” report, the U.S. National Academy of Science concluded that children can acquire up to 35 percent of their lifetime exposure to carcinogenic pesticides by age five. What’s more, many of these chemicals, such as *organophosphates*, are neurotoxins, which can damage a child’s developing nervous system and lead to attention disorders. “Learning disabilities and attention disorders affect millions of children in the United States. We need to know if some chemicals are contributing to these disorders,” says Ken Bonnet, Ph.D., of the *Learning Disabilities Association of America*. Better buy organic food for yourself, too, because newborns can “inherit” pesticides through the placenta, and they permeate breast milk, as well.

At the core of this problem is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which has set acceptable pesticide residue levels based on healthy adult males, not children. Back in 1996, President Clinton signed into law the *Food Quality Protection Act*, which required the EPA to establish new minimum allowable pesticide levels on all foods taking into account infants and toddlers. They were given ten years (2006) to finish the job, but things are not going well. The *Consumers Union*, a non-profit testing and information organization, checked the EPA’s progress at the half way mark (2001) and gave them a big “D.” The pesticide industry has also slowed things down by taking legal action against EPA in an effort to dilute the regulation.

So what’s a Parent to do? Don’t wait for the government to “protect” you! Buy organic for yourself and your children today. In the U.S., *Earth’s Best* is the leading line of organic baby food. *Nature’s One* makes organic formulas, both dairy and non-dairy. In the United Kingdom, there are a few popular lines including *Truuuly Scrumptious* (yes, truuuly) and *Baby Organix*. *Hipp Organic* baby food is widely available throughout Europe, including Eastern Europe. Even the big conventional U.S. baby food manufacturer *Gerber* produces a certified organic line called *Tender Harvest*. All of these companies use only premium quality, certified organic ingredients. And there are no additives, salt, sugar, thickeners, or artificial colors or flavors. Of course, if you don’t mind working in the kitchen, you can easily make your own purées, smoothies, and mashes from fresh organic fruits and veggies. All you need is a small blender. And while you’re at it, don’t forget to shop for organic cotton diapers, bibs, wipes, and shoulder carriers, available from companies such as *Earth Baby*. Organic is a great way to start a life.

We all know that organic food is generally more expensive than conventional food and that price is the number one reason for people’s resistance to purchasing organic. But that inhibition is rarest in the domain of new mothers and their children. A study released this January on Scottish children tells a lot.

More than half of Scottish children under two are fed an organic food diet by their parents. For many of these families, the toddlers are the only ones eating organic. The parents are willing to spend the money on their children’s health, even when they cannot afford it for themselves. In fact, a supermarket survey indicated that the baby food category outsells the adult organic food section despite the greater variety of the latter.

Baby sales throughout Europe are high, (Germany is the highest) and even in America, organic baby food sales increased 18% last year, a figure that is almost double the growth of the rest of the organic arena

including such categories as dairy and produce.

What is the reason for this baby food bonanza? There has long been a list of overwhelming evidence against the impact of agricultural and food processing chemicals on human health. But that evidence is easier to substantiate with children than adults. And unlike the silent majority, new mothers are passionate protectors of their children's health. Proving the damage are two 2005 studies published in the peer-reviewed *Environmental Health Perspectives* journal, a U.S. government *National Institutes of Health publication*. In one study, when children changed their diets to conventional food, the pesticide levels dropped dramatically and rose again when the diet was reversed. "We didn't expect that to drop in such dramatic fashion," said Emory University's Chensheng Lu, who led the Environmental Protection Agency-funded research.

The second study tested the urine of pregnant women for phthalates, an endocrine-disrupting chemical commonly found in cosmetics, fragrances, plastics, paints, vinyl floors, and pharmaceuticals. Later, the researchers went back and examined the baby boys produced by those new mothers. Even at the early age of only 30 months, the study found indications of potential harm to the boys future reproductive development. Previous research on rodents showed impaired male hormone and genital development.

Unfortunately, politics and profits, can get in the way even when it comes to the sensitive subject of protecting children's health. Each year, thousands of children suffer from exposure to rat poison, especially in poor, usually ethnic, urban areas where hygiene is deficient. Infants tend to crawl on the floor, pick up the poisonous pellets, and stick them in their mouths. A child safety law was passed in 1998 added a bitter tasting agent the rat poison so that children would immediately spit it out. A dye clearly indicated to parents that the poison was touched. However, in 2001, the EPA revoked those safety precautions saying only that it "came to a mutual agreement with the rodenticide [manufacturers] to rescind the bittering agent and indicator dye requirements." Such are the ways of rich and powerful lobbyists. It took a U.S. federal judge in August of 2005 to intervene and stop the agency from revoking this key child protection law.

Whether the pesticides are in the food or in the environment, does not matter. Poison from any source is trouble. The larger problem is that children have a higher concentration of these poisons per unit of body weight than adults. And their relatively immature immune systems cannot detoxify these substances as well as adults.

New mother Julie Miller, from Inverness, Scotland said: "I want to give him [her son] the best start in life and strengthen his immune system...The food is slightly more expensive but it's worth it because you can't put a price on their health..."

The fact is that with organic food, you get a good value. Organic milk, for example, can contain up to 71 per cent more omega 3 than non-organic milk and has a better ratio of omega 3 to omega 6 than conventional milk.

And the price is not always more. Consider making your own baby food from bulk organic ingredients. That is one sure way to save money and it costs a lot less than baby food jars. All you need is a blender and some fresh organic fruits and vegetables. The recipes are easy because toddler food can be a simple mixture of 2 or 3 fruits/vegetables. There are even special blenders that enable you to blend, store, and serve all from the same contain container. How easy can it get! (My favorite is the Tribest Personal Blender www.sproutman.com/Tribest_Blender.html) The labor is nothing in comparison to the flavor and nutrition rewards of fresh produce—better than bottled (packaged) baby food, any day. Not to

mention the knowledge and satisfaction that your child has got a good and safe start to a healthy life.

For more information, read **THE ORGANIC FOOD GUIDE**. How to Shop Smarter and Eat Healthier. By Steve Meyerowitz or visit <http://www.sproutman.com/organic.html>

More Resources.

www.earthsbest.com

www.naturesone.com

www.earthbaby.com

www.bathorganicbabyfood.co.uk

www.hipp.co.uk

www.babyorganix.co.uk