

Organic food in pregnancy -- new study

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Who eats organic food when they are pregnant? Is it just certain groups? What kind of organic foods are most popular? A recent study from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health provides some answers. The study includes nearly 65,000 women in the Norwegian Mother and Child Cohort Study.

"We know little about the consumption of [organic food](#) during pregnancy, and the goal of this study was to find out what is consumed and the characteristics of women who choose organic food," said PhD student Hanne Torjusen.

Questions were asked about six different food groups: milk and dairy products, bread and cereals, eggs, [vegetables](#), fruit and meat. The results show that organic food is widely used among [pregnant women](#) in Norway across different groups.

One in ten consume organic food

Almost one in ten pregnant women consumes organic food regularly, and organic eggs and vegetables were most often selected. Compared to those who did not consume organic food, the women who did had the following characteristics:

- They were either in the group with more than 4 years of [higher education](#), or in the group with under 12 years of education in total

- Most were either under 25 or over 40 years old
- There were many with low family incomes (below 300,000 Norwegian kroner per year)
- Many were students or had a partner who was a student
- They had normal or low weight ([body mass index](#))
- They exercised frequently - at least 3 times a week
- Overall, there were very few who were vegetarians (0.2 %), and a minority drank alcohol (11.6 %) or smoked (8.4 %) during pregnancy. However, the use of organic food is more widespread in these three groups.

"We see that although there are several elements that are consistent with health recommendations, organic food consumption in pregnancy is not unambiguously associated with what is perceived as a [healthy lifestyle](#). It is also not uniquely associated with the group that traditionally is most healthy - those with the highest education and income. This shows that it is important to take into account other factors besides education and income in the further research of possible health effects of organic foods in the diet," said Hanne Torjusen.

More information: Characteristics associated with organic food consumption during pregnancy; data from a large cohort of pregnant women in Norway. Hanne Torjusen, Anne Lise Brantsaeter, Margaretha Haugen, Geir Lieblein, Hein Stigum, Gun Roos, Gerd Holmboe-Ottesen, Helle Margrete Meltzer. *BMC Public Health* 2010, 10:775
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