

Pediatricians offer first report on organic foods (Update)

October 22 2012, by Lindsey Tanner

Parents who want to reduce their kids' exposure to pesticides may seek out organic fruits and vegetables, but they aren't necessarily safer or more nutritious than conventional foods, America's leading pediatricians group says in its first advice on organics.

Science hasn't proven that eating pesticide-free food makes people any healthier, the American Academy of Pediatrics said.

"Theoretically there could be negative effects, especially in young children with growing brains," but rigorous scientific evidence is lacking, said Dr. Janet Silverstein, a co-author of the academy's new report and a pediatric endocrinologist at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

"We just can't say for certain that organics is better without long-term controlled studies," she said.

The report was published online Monday in *Pediatrics* and echoes a Stanford University study released last month. That research concluded that while eating organic fruits and vegetables can reduce pesticide exposure, the amount measured in conventionally grown produce was within safety limits.

Since organic foods tend to be costlier, a good strategy for penny-pinching parents concerned about pesticides is to buy only organic versions of foods with the most pesticide residue—including apples,

peaches, strawberries and celery, Silverstein said.

But the pediatricians group says higher prices on organic foods might lead some parents to buy fewer fruits and vegetables—not a good strategy since both have health benefits including reducing risks for obesity, heart disease and some cancers.

Parents should aim to provide their families a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whether organic or not, along with plenty of whole grains and low-fat or fat-free dairy products, the report says.

More information: Pediatrics: www.pediatrics.org

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