

# Pediatricians' group offers parents advice on GMO foods

December 11 2023, by Dennis Thompson

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Some parents are concerned about the effects of genetically modified foods on their children's health.

As a result, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has issued a new clinical report urging more [research](#) and transparency into genetically modified organism (GMO) foods to help families make informed decisions when food shopping.

"A trip to the [grocery store](#) can be complicated these days, as parents navigate time and cost barriers, concerns about food allergies and questions about [organic food](#) and potential health effects of genetic modification of food," said lead report author [Dr. Steven Abrams](#), a member of the AAP's Committee on Nutrition.

GMO foods contain genetic tweaks that can make them more resistant to herbicides, less likely to rot, and even more nutritious.

Research has found that the novel genes introduced into GMO crops pose no unique hazards to [human health](#), according to the AAP report, which was published online on Dec. 11 in the journal *Pediatrics*.

However, questions remain about the potential health hazards of herbicides used to control weeds around GMO products, the report says.

Glyphosate, sold in stores as RoundUp, is often sprayed on crops like corn and soybeans that are genetically modified to withstand it. But residue of glyphosate sometimes remains on the [food](#) all the way to a person's dinner table.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has held that there are [no risks to human health](#) from glyphosate, but other experts are concerned the weed killer could be causing unknown harm.

Pediatricians say parents who want to minimize GMO products can focus on a diet of primarily whole, plant-based foods, and minimizing ultra-processed foods.

"Fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds, legumes [including lentils, beans, peas], herbs and spices, healthy fat sources and [whole grains](#)—most of these foods in their whole and minimally processed state are naturally non-GMO," co-author [Dr. Jaclyn Lewis Albin](#) said in an AAP news release.

Families who want to avoid GMO products completely can buy products labeled as "organic" or "non-GMO," based on third-party testing, the AAP report says.

Organic labeling guarantees non-GMO status, as [organic farmers](#) are not allowed to use seeds, [animal feed](#), or ingredients with GMO or any conventional pesticides or antibiotics.

For their part, pediatricians should minimize fear-based messaging about GMO foods, understanding that non-GMO foods might be too expensive for some families, the report said.

Pediatricians should recognize the limitations that family finances impose and emphasize the benefits of minimally processed, affordable foods that are not bioengineered.

Schools and hospitals that care for children might consider avoiding GMO foods to minimize glyphosate exposure when alternatives are available and affordable, the report said.

And researchers should focus on learning more about the potential long-term health effects of GMO foods, both good and bad, the report concluded.

"The AAP urges transparency of information about [food products](#) to help families make informed decisions," Albin said. "A pediatrician can help cut through any confusion and support families with practical

guidance about what goes in the grocery cart. I find it easiest to focus on what we should feed children rather than what to avoid—and there are many nourishing options."

**More information:** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has more about [GMO foods](#).

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