

Let Food be your Environmental Medicine

We take stock of our impact on our planet, our home. We buy organic foods. We avoid food artificial food additives and preservatives. We ride our bikes when we can. We recycle. We do these things and believe ourselves and our families to be free of environmental toxins. The truth is, we are just less toxic.

In actuality, anyone reading this could have a fat biopsy which would reveal the presence of chemical residues. Multiple published studies, including those by the Centers for Disease Control, have clearly shown that we all are carrying burdens of multiple environmental toxins, including Dioxins, DDE/T, PCBs, Phthalates (plastics), Styrene, Dichlorobenzene, Xylene, Ethylphenol, Chlordanes, Organophosphate pesticides, Lead, Mercury, Cadmium, Arsenic, and Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (from auto exhaust).

For example, everyone has DDE, the breakdown product of DDT, stored in their fat. After breakdown of DDT in the soil, DDE is concentrated in root vegetables, particularly carrots, and squashes. But DDT is no longer used in the United States. True. But it is still in the soil and it is made in the United States and sold to other countries who use it and ship their produce back to us. Ironic, huh?

In essence, by healthy living we are slowing or preventing our toxic burden from accumulating. We still need to work with what is there. As our toxic burden is increased, we increase the toxic burden that our children start their life with as many toxic substances that we experience through our food and environment are fat soluble and research has demonstrated that these substances cross the placenta to accumulate in the fetus. Thus, only a few generations ago, our relatives started with a relatively low toxic burden which has increased with each subsequent generation.

The main exposure of toxic chemicals is through the diet. Think about it: food goes in three or more times per day. If it is not organic, small amounts of agricultural chemicals enter your body more regularly than any supplement or medication that you take. In general, we do not see people keeling over from acute toxic exposure. However, we do see people with chronic degenerative disease.

“What can I do?”

Firstly, do not feel that you are just accumulating toxic material in your body and that is the end of the story. In fact, the body has specialized mechanisms for dealing with many of the toxins we experience on a daily basis. However, our bodies do not have a finite capacity to deal with a very large variety of toxins on a daily basis. Because some environmental toxins are unavoidable, like car exhaust and DDE/T in our soil, a lifestyle that limits exposure and stresses organic foods helps prevent additional toxin accumulation.

Eat Organic or Local: Both!

The Environmental Working Group (<http://www.ewg.org/>) has published a "Shopper Guide" listing the fruits and vegetables with the most and least pesticide residues. If you have

a limited shopping budget, concentrate your shopping dollars on buying organic versions of these 'dirty dozen' items, as well as organic eggs, milk and meat as animals concentrate toxins from their feed. For any conventional items purchased, choose local to decrease the amount of pollution created to get the food to your plate.

The 12 fruits and vegetables with the MOST pesticide residues are:

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| 1. Strawberries | 5. Peaches | 9. Apricots |
| 2. Bell peppers (green and red) | 6. Mexican Cantaloupe | 10. Green Beans |
| 3. Spinach | 7. Celery | 11. Chilean Grapes |
| 4. U.S. Cherries | 8. Apples | 12. Cucumbers |

The 12 fruits and vegetables with the LEAST pesticide residues are:

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| 1. Avocado | 5. Cauliflower | 9. Plums |
| 2. Corn | 6. Brussels Sprouts | 10. Green Onions |
| 3. Onions | 7. U.S. Grapes | 11. Watermelon |
| 4. Sweet Potato | 8. Bananas | 12. Broccoli |

Fortunately, there are natural compounds that can block chemical damage created by various environmental toxins such as organophosphate pesticides, heavy metals and solvents. Although specific treatment for accumulation of these substances is beyond the scope of this article, something that you can do for general prevention and maintenance is the naturopathic cleanse at Pilates Space. This program will teach you about safe ways to reduce your own toxic burden and protect your children from high toxin accumulation. While the reality of the toxic assault can at first be frightening, you can take steps to protect yourselves and your families in the face of this problem.