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Why Should You Care About Pesticides?

There is growing consensus in the scientific community that small doses of pesticides and other chemicals can adversely affect people, especially during vulnerable periods of fetal development and childhood when exposures can have long lasting effects. Because the toxic effects of pesticides are worrisome, not well understood, or in some cases completely unstudied, shoppers are wise to minimize exposure to pesticides whenever possible.

Will Washing and Peeling Help?

Nearly all of the data used to create these lists already considers how people typically wash and prepare produce (for example, apples are washed before testing, bananas are peeled). While washing and rinsing fresh produce may reduce levels of some pesticides, it does not eliminate them. Peeling also reduces exposures, but valuable nutrients often go down the drain with the peel. The best option is to eat a varied diet, wash all produce, and choose organic when possible to reduce exposure to potentially harmful chemicals.

How This Guide Was Developed

The produce ranking was developed by analysts at the not-for-profit Environmental Working Group (EWG) based on the results of nearly 43,000 tests for pesticides on produce collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration between 2000 and 2005.

RANK	FRUIT OR VEGGIE	SCORE
1 (worst)	Peaches	100 (highest pesticide load)
2	Apples	96
3	Sweet Bell Peppers	86
4	Celery	85
5	Nectarines	84
6	Strawberries	83
7	Cherries	75
8	Lettuce	69
9	Grapes - Imported	68
10	Pears	65
11	Spinach	60
12	Potatoes	58
13	Carrots	57
14	Green Beans	55
15	Hot Peppers	53
16	Cucumbers	52
17	Raspberries	47
18	Plums	46
19	Oranges	46
20	Grapes-Domestic	46
21	Cauliflower	39
22	Tangerine	38
23	Mushrooms	37
24	Cantaloupe	34
25	Lemon	31
26	Honeydew Melon	31
27	Grapefruit	31
28	Winter Squash	31
29	Tomatoes	30
30	Sweet Potatoes	30
31	Watermelon	25
32	Blueberries	24
33	Papaya	21
34	Eggplant	19
35	Broccoli	18
36	Cabbage	17
37	Bananas	16
38	Kiwi	14
39	Asparagus	11
40	Sweet Peas-Frozen	11
41	Mango	9
42	Pineapples	7
43	Sweet Corn-Frozen	2
44	Avocado	1

45 (best)

Onions

1 (lowest pesticide load)