

Living IT

GOING ORGANIC

BY JENNIFER NEWTON REENTS

Tips to get you started

You already know that putting healthful, good food into your body not only helps you lose weight, but it makes you feel better...healthier. A growing number of people believe that "healthful" is synonymous with "organic" — free of pesticides, hormones, synthetic substances and preservatives. If you're interested in "going organic," here are some tips to get you started.



What organic means

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, organic crops are raised without using most conventional pesticides, petroleum-based fertilizers and sewage-sludge-based fertilizers. The term "organic" can apply to meat, as well: Animals raised on an organic farm must be fed organic feed and given access to the outdoors. They are given no antibiotics or growth hormones.



People choose to eat organic foods for two main reasons, says nutritionist Georgianna Donadio, Ph.D., founder and director of the National Institute of Whole Health in Wellesley, Massachusetts. She's been helping people "go organic" for more than 30 years. "They have read or been educated and believe that the organic food is better for them, or they have a health problem they are trying to control," Donadio says. "For some people, eating what they feel is superior food helps them to feel that they are doing something proactive about their health — this can be very empowering. [Some people] do feel and see a difference in their energy levels, appearance or overall well-being." Some also like the eco-friendly approach to organic farming.

Getting started

- 1) Learn the differences in food labeling, says Anthony J. Burlay, M.D, author of *The Foundation Diet: Your Body Was Designed To Eat* (Zen-Fusion, 2004; ISBN 0974771406). “Organic,’ ‘made with organic products,’ ‘free range,’ ‘hormone free’ and ‘natural’ all mean different things and may not meet your definition of ‘organic.’ Decide what types of organic products are acceptable to you,” he says.
- 2) Prepare a new grocery budget. Organic foods sometimes cost a little more.
- 3) “Pick your battles: Go organic for dairy, meat and produce,” says Sophie Pachella, a nutritionist and lifestyle/weight management consultant who owns EatStrong [www.EatStrong.com] in New York City. “Grocery items such as canned foods, crackers, bread are perhaps less critical.”
- 4) Always wash your organic fruits and veggies. Remember, even organic crops can be exposed to pesticides and agricultural chemicals pervasive in rain or wind flow, Pachella says. Additionally, soil residue can harbor bacteria and viruses that can make you sick.
- 5) “Don’t be afraid to try new things,” says Dr. Burlay. “You might find some organic products you would not normally think of eating, like ostrich burgers or different varieties of lettuces,” he says. “Give them a try — you may be pleasantly surprised. Part of carb-conscious dieting should be the challenge to eat and create dishes with flavor and variety. Going organic is a great way to do this and can provide you with the inspiration to stay with your plan.”
- 6) Include organic nuts, seeds and milk substitutes in your diet. They’re an inexpensive way to expand your nutritional horizons even more, says Donadio.