

# Are organic foods better for my health?

## Is organic food more nutritious?

There is not enough scientific evidence to say that organic food is more nutritious than non-organic food or that there are any health benefits to eating organic foods.

Some foods grown organically may have more nutrients, and some may have the same, or even less, than those grown on non-organic farms.

Many factors can affect the nutritional content of food (organic and non-organic) such as:

- soil quality
- growing conditions
- harvesting methods and timing
- species of animal and what they are eating

Some studies show that organically produced vegetables and fruit may be:

### higher in:

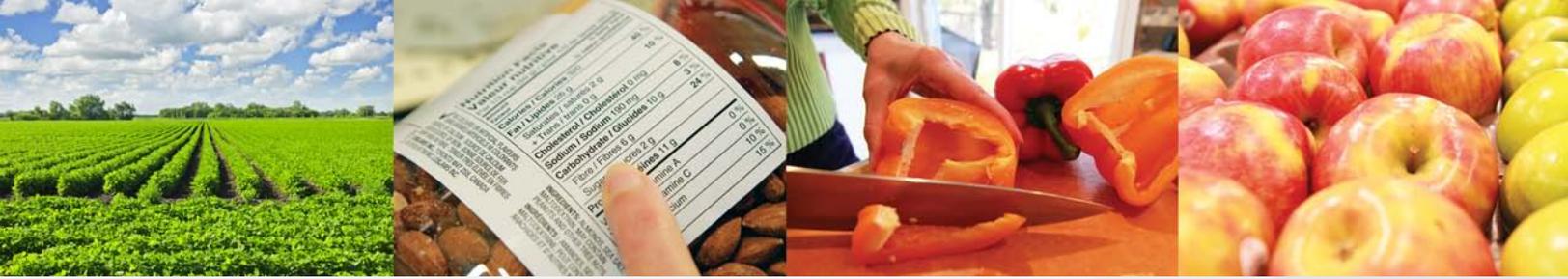
- phosphorus
- vitamin C
- phytochemicals (natural plant compounds that may have health benefits)

### lower in:

- nitrogen
- protein

Studies looking at nutrient differences between organic and non-organic farmed meats, milk, eggs and poultry have found that some nutrients may be slightly higher in organic farmed products.

However, the small differences in nutrient levels in organic foods have not been found to benefit nutrition or overall health. Better quality studies are needed.



## What are some basic differences between organic farming and non-organic farming?

Organic foods are produced without synthetic (man-made) fertilizers and pesticides, growth hormones, antibiotics and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Organic farmers use crop rotation, plant compost and composted manure to enrich the soil.

Animals that are raised organically are fed only organic feed. Antibiotics, growth hormones and insecticides are not allowed.

Some non-organic farmers also use a combination of organic farming practices such as crop rotation, composted manures and avoidance of synthetic fertilizers. This makes it hard to say that all foods grown organically are more nutritious than foods grown in other ways.

## How do I know if foods are organic?

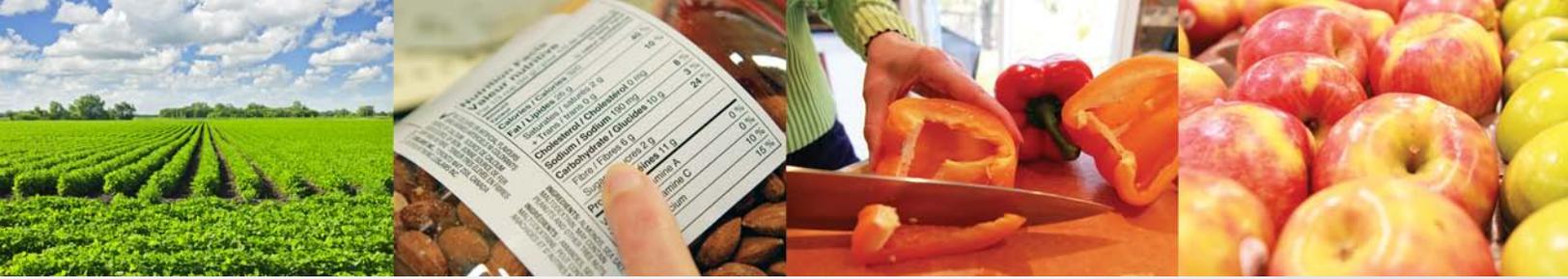
In Canada, organic foods are grown under strict regulations. In order to make an organic claim, a food must meet the requirements laid out by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Certified organic foods will have a special logo on the packaging.

For more on organic food labelling guidelines, visit the Canadian Food Inspection Agency webpage on [Organic Products](#).

## Is organic food as safe as other food?

Yes. In Canada, both organic and non-organic foods have to follow strict guidelines and are tested to make sure they are safe to eat.

Organic produce may have lower levels of some pesticides. Although Canadians are not exposed to unhealthy levels of pesticides from organic or non-organic food it is still wise to reduce exposure when you can.



To reduce pesticide exposure, all foods, organic and non-organic, should be prepared safely:

- vegetables and fruit should be washed under running water prior to eating or cooking. Rinsing well under cold water will help to remove the minimal levels of pesticides typically found on produce.
- meat, poultry, milk and eggs should be properly handled, stored and cooked to reduce risk of food poisoning.

Learn more on safe food preparation to protect you and your family from food borne illness at Health Canada's website on [Food Safety](#).

### Is there an advantage to buying organic food?

Like any purchase, buying organic food is a personal choice. While some organic products may be higher in a few nutrients and have lower amounts of some pesticide residues, what's most important is that you eat a variety of healthy foods from [Canada's Food Guide](#).



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