

Nutrition Nuggets: **Organic Meats Are Not Health Foods**

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Some people believe that by choosing organic meats, especially wild meat, they avoid the risks associated with consuming factory-farmed meat. Let's see how true this is.

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So-called organic meats are sold as a means for people to reduce their exposure to hormones and chemical toxins. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) states that animals raised on an organic operation must be fed organic feed and given access to the out-doors. They are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic crops are raised without using most conventional pesticides and using no petroleum-based or sewage-sludge-based fertilizers.

However, while concentrations of some contaminants may be decreased, switching to organic meat does nothing to decrease the risk for

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the diseases that remain the biggest killers of Americans. Cholesterol, fat (especially saturated fat), and animal protein are the major culprits in meat that are associated with higher risks of heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. They are also associated with the development of the many risk factors that lead to these diseases, including obesity and hypertension. Animal products, however they are produced, increase the risk of many diseases.

Cholesterol Found in All Animal Products

The liver naturally produces all the cholesterol the human body requires, so we never need outside sources. All foods from animals—dairy products, meat (no matter what kind), fish, eggs—contain cholesterol, whereas plants have essentially none.

Cholesterol-containing foods should be avoided completely.

Saturated Fat

Saturated fat is even worse than cholesterol in foods—and its content is not affected by organic status. Saturated fat is particularly harmful because it stimulates the liver to manufacture more cholesterol. Fat is marbled throughout all meat and poultry, so the only way to avoid it is to avoid meat altogether. And about 15 percent to 30 percent of the fat in fish is saturated fat. A study published in the *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Medicine* showed that people who adopt a vegetarian diet naturally reduce their saturated fat intake by 26 percent and achieve a significant drop in cholesterol levels in just six weeks.

Meat's saturated fat content is not affected by organic status.

Osteoporosis

Animal protein from any source is bad for bones. Studies have shown that animal proteins encourage increased calcium excretion and risk of fracture and osteoporosis. Plant protein—in beans, grains, and vegetables—does not appear to have this negative effect on bones.

Impaired Kidney Function

Protein releases nitrogen into the blood as it is digested and metabolized. When too much protein is consumed, this places a strain on the kidneys, which must expel the waste through the urine. High-protein diets are associated with reduced kidney function. Over time, individuals who consume very large amounts of protein, particularly animal protein, risk permanent loss of kidney function.

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The kidney-damaging effect was seen only with animal protein. Plant protein had no harmful effect.

Heart Disease

Four major risk factors for heart disease are high cholesterol, high blood pressure, smoking, and a sedentary lifestyle. None of these are alleviated by switching to organic meat.

Plant-based diets have consistently been proven to be the most effective in preventing and reversing heart disease.

Cancer

Contaminants found in animal products can

lead to increases in cancer. However, many of the known carcinogens found in meat would not be decreased by switching to organic meat. The contribution of meat to cancer risk appears to stem from its nutrient make-up, high in saturated fat and devoid of fiber, rather than to the conditions of production.

NOTE: Read the entire article at:

www.pcrm.org/health/prevmед/organic_meats.html