

Organic Food: An In-Depth Look

Organic food was always linked to safe and healthy. However, some overseas studies indicate that the nutritional value of organic food is not very much different from that of conventional food products. Is it necessary to consider organic food a more healthy choice?



Organic food = safe?

The use of synthetic compounds is avoided in all procedures, from production to processing, of the manufacture of organic food. Therefore, consumption of organic food can reduce the intake of these compounds in theory. However, organic food has food safety risks. For example, a certain US brand of organic granola bars had to be recalled in February 2010 owing to salmonella contamination.

Moreover, as no pesticides are used on organic crops, they do have a shorter shelf life, and decay faster than normal crops. For the sake of your health, eat them as soon as possible.



Organic food = healthier and more nutritious?

Studies have found no evidence of any extra nutritional benefit from eating organic food. According to an assessment carried out by the British Food Standards Agency, to date there has not been evidence to show that organic food implies additional health benefits. Similar findings were obtained from assessments carried out by food safety authorities in France and Sweden.

Higher food price = More nutritious?

Organic food is more expensive in general. However, higher prices do not necessarily reflect a higher nutritional value. A survey in the UK found that some processed organic foods in the market, such as baked beans in tomato sauce, biscuits, peanut butter, minestrone and pasta sauce, were priced six times higher than their non-organic counterparts on average, and yet they contained a larger amount of energy, fat, sugar and sodium due to the addition of a large amount of grease, sugar or salt for seasoning during their processing.

In fact, healthy eating is not all about organic food. More important is to follow the healthy eating principle. Meals should be taken at regular times and in regular amounts. Have a balanced diet, which should be as diversified as possible. Avoid picky eating, and make sure each meal consists of cereals or grains as staple. Eat more fruit and vegetables, and cut down on high-sodium (including preserved/pickled foods), high-fat or high-sugar foods.

To know more about ...

- ✧ healthy eating, please visit 'Health Zone' website at <http://www.cheu.gov.hk>
- ✧ 'Health@work.hk Project', please visit <http://www.healthatwork.gov.hk>