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Program on
Breast Cancer and Environmental Risk Factors

SPRECHER
INSTITUTE
for Comparative
Cancer Research

Chemicals and the Risk of Breast Cancer

Frequently Asked Questions

■ Question

Does washing food remove pesticides?

■ Answer

Not necessarily.

Some pesticides are found on the surface of foods. Other pesticides may be taken up through the roots and into the plant, and therefore cannot be removed.

A variety of methods can be used to help remove the small amounts of surface pesticide residues. These include washing with water, peeling, and cooking.

Always Wash It Anyway

All fresh produce, whether it's grown with or without pesticides, should be washed with water to remove dirt and potentially harmful bacteria.

Is Organic Food Pesticide Free?

Organic food is not necessarily pesticide free, though it will have much lower levels of pesticides. Pesticides can travel in the air (or "drift") from a treated field to an untreated field. Pesticides can also persist in soil and be taken up by some foods even though no new pesticides were used to grow the food.

Learn More

To learn more about pesticide residues in food and ways to minimize your exposures, see Fact Sheet 24, [Consumer Concerns about Pesticides in Food](#).

Answered by: [Suzanne Snedeker, Ph.D.](#)

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