

President's Cancer Panel: Reduce environmental risks through food choices

The President's Cancer Panel Report released on May 6, 2010, exhorts consumers to choose food grown without pesticides or chemical fertilizers, antibiotics, and growth hormones to help decrease their exposure to environmental chemicals that can increase their risk of contracting cancer. Organic agriculture and foods deliver all the President's Cancer Panel recommendations.*

Here are excerpts taken from the President's Cancer Panel report ("Reducing Environmental Cancer Risk: What We Can Do Now," submitted to President Obama by Dr. LaSalle Leffall, Jr., an oncologist and professor of surgery at Howard University, and Dr. Margaret L. Kripke, an immunologist at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston), and from the Panel's letter to President Obama:

- "Exposure to pesticides can be decreased by choosing, to the extent possible, food grown without pesticides or chemical fertilizers... Similarly, exposure to antibiotics, growth hormones, and toxic run-off from livestock feed lots can be minimized by eating free-range meat raised without these medications."
- "The American people—even before they are born—are bombarded continually with myriad combinations of these dangerous exposures," the panel wrote in a letter to President Obama. It added. "The Panel urges you most strongly to use the power of your office to remove the carcinogens and other toxins from our food, water, and air that needlessly increase health care costs, cripple our Nation's productivity, and devastate American lives."
- The panel added, "Many known or suspected carcinogens first identified through studies of industrial and agricultural occupational exposures have since found their way into soil, air, water and numerous consumer products... Some of these chemicals have been found in maternal blood, placental tissue, and breast milk samples from pregnant women and mothers who recently gave birth. Thus, chemical contaminants are being passed on to the next generation, both prenatally and during breastfeeding."

The President's Cancer Panel's full report is available online at http://deainfo.nci.nih.gov/advisory/pcp/pcp08-09rpt/PCP_Report_08-09_508.pdf.

* Organic foods, which are produced using scientifically based practices, avoid the use of the deleterious chemicals which the President's Cancer Panel cites. In fact, organic food production and processing represent the only system that uses certification and inspection to verify that these chemicals are not used on the farm all the way to our dinner tables. Organic production is based on a system of farming that maintains and replenishes soil fertility without the use of toxic and persistent pesticides (herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides) and synthetic fertilizers. Organically produced foods also must be produced without the use of antibiotics, synthetic hormones, genetic engineering and other excluded practices, sewage sludge, or irradiation. Cloning animals or using their products would be considered inconsistent with organic practices. Organic foods are minimally processed without artificial ingredients, preservatives, or irradiation to maintain the integrity of the food. In addition, animal confinement in feedlots is prohibited.