Is Organic Food Worth the Splurge?

November 1, 2008 By Kellee Terrell

Organic foods are as hot as iPhones and Facebook these days—but unlike most fads, these healthful eats should never go out of fashion. Studies suggest that hormone- and chemical-free foods avoid dangerous pesticides that can cause illness and compromise our immune systems. So, especially for HIV-positive people, it may be time to go organic.

But before you start buying, note that a 3-pound bag of organic grapes can set you back $12. Organic prices may be double those for non-organic food. And with meds and gas draining your bank account, buying organic may send you into the red. To help you save money, *POZ* delivers the 411 on which organics are really worth the price.

Splurge

First up are milk, eggs, poultry and meats: The cattle, chicken and pigs that end up as certified organic products cannot be given antibiotics, growth hormones or feed made from animal by-products (which can transmit mad cow disease). Similarly, thin-skinned fruits and veggies—which are likely to absorb any pesticides and chemicals—are worth every penny. These include apples, bell peppers, celery, cherries, imported grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, red raspberries, spinach and strawberries.

Save your cash

You don't need organic varieties of fruits with thick peels, such as bananas, oranges and grapefruits—the peel protects the fruit from pesticides. Also pass on seafoods claiming to be organic; the USDA has yet to set standards for those.

More ways to save on organic food

Choosing organic juices and dried or frozen fruit instead of whole fruit allows you to reap some of the costlier fruits' benefits without paying the extra pennies.

Buy in season. Sure, organic strawberries and blueberries are good for your body, but winter purchases are bad for your wallet.

Forget fancy labels. Instead, look for affordable organic brands from your local store or Trader Joe's, Kroger, even Wal-Mart—their organic lines include frozen vegetables, milk, syrup and cookies. Now, that's a trend anyone can follow.

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