

Why Should You Care About Pesticides?

There is growing consensus in the scientific community that small doses of pesticides and other chemicals can adversely affect people, especially during vulnerable periods of fetal development and childhood when exposures can have long lasting effects. Because the toxic effects of pesticides are worrisome, not well understood, or in some cases completely unstudied, shoppers are wise to minimize exposure to pesticides whenever possible.

Will Washing and Peeling Help?

Nearly all of the data used to create these lists already considers how people typically wash and prepare produce (for example, apples are washed before testing, bananas are peeled). While washing and rinsing fresh produce may reduce levels of some pesticides, it does not eliminate them. Peeling also reduces exposures, but valuable nutrients often go down the drain with the peel. The best option is to eat a varied diet, wash all produce, and choose organic when possible to reduce exposure to potentially harmful chemicals.

How This Guide Was Developed

The produce ranking was developed by analysts at the not-for-profit Environmental Working Group (EWG) based on the results of nearly 43,000 tests for pesticides on produce collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration between 2000 and 2004. A detailed description of the [criteria used in developing the rankings](#) is available as well as a full list of fresh fruits and vegetables that have been tested (see below).

EWG is a not-for-profit environmental research organization dedicated to improving public health and protecting the environment by reducing pollution in air, water and food. For more information please visit www.ewg.org.

The Full List: 43 Fruits & Veggies

RANK	FRUIT OR VEGGIE	SCORE
1 (worst)	Peaches	100 (highest pesticide load)
2	Apples	89
3	Sweet Bell Peppers	86
4	Celery	85
5	Nectarines	84
6	Strawberries	82
7	Cherries	75
8	Pears	65
9	Grapes - Imported	65
10	Spinach	60
11	Lettuce	59

12	Potatoes	58
13	Carrots	57
14	Green Beans	53
15	Hot Peppers	53
16	Cucumbers	52
17	Raspberries	47
18	Plums	45
19	Grapes - Domestic	43
20	Oranges	42
21	Grapefruit	40
22	Tangerine	38
23	Mushrooms	37
24	Cantaloupe	34
25	Honeydew Melon	31
26	Tomatoes	30
27	Sweet Potatoes	30
28	Watermelon	28
29	Winter Squash	27
30	Cauliflower	27
31	Blueberries	24
32	Papaya	21
33	Broccoli	18
34	Cabbage	17
35	Bananas	16
36	Kiwi	14
37	Sweet peas - frozen	11
38	Asparagus	11
39	Mango	9
40	Pineapples	7
41	Sweet Corn - frozen	2
42	Avocado	1
43 (best)	Onions	1 (lowest pesticide load)

Note: We ranked a total of 43 different fruits and vegetables but grapes are listed twice because we looked at both domestic and imported samples.

