



Fruit & Vegetable Health Index

The most dramatic and simplest way to positively affect your health may be to increase your dietary intake of vegetables and fruits. However, simply consuming these foods does not guarantee optimal health benefits. There are several factors related to vegetable and fruit consumption that may adversely influence health, some may even be hazardous. I have selected fifty-five common vegetables and fruits and created a rating index which will guide you in making informed and healthier choices.



I rated vegetables and fruits on a scale of 1 through 10 (unhealthiest to healthiest) to illustrate potential adverse health effects for each. Three criteria were utilized in this rating. They are pesticide/herbicide contamination, glycemic load and the pH (acid/base) effects of foods on our bodies. The healthiest rating of ten was achieved by no foods. One food, kelp/sea weed, scored a near perfect 9.5 out of 10.



The propensity for herbicide and pesticide contamination in our food poses a dramatic threat to health that must be identified. Chemically contaminated food is poison pure and simple. This health effect was weighted heavier than other criteria. Herbicide and pesticide contamination accounted for 40% of the total 10-point perfect score to reflect that danger. There are 2 primary ways that food is contaminated by Herbicides and pesticides. It is absorbed through the surfaces, including the roots of growing plants. They also collect on plant surfaces as residues and are consumed. Peeling foods like apples is effective but the nutritional impact of the food may be compromised. Utilizing products like **Fruit + Veggie Wash** to thoroughly clean fruits

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and vegetables of chemicals, dirt, and other contaminants is a recommended practice. It can be purchased from [The Honest Company](#). Click on the “cleaning” tab on their web site.

Controlling blood sugar fluctuations and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) is critical to the prevention and control of diabetes and obesity. Glycemic load was chosen over glycemic index as the criteria because load is a direct predictor of blood sugar's actual effect on the body and a better predictor of insulin response. Glycemic load was assigned a 30 % overall influence.

The body’s pH directly affects our health. The acidifying or alkalinizing effects from food consumed largely dictates the pH of our bodies, which prefer to be slightly alkaline. An acid state leads to increased inflammation and other maladies which can be largely avoided by maintaining a healthy pH balance.



The fifty-five foods in the chart are ranked in order from healthiest at the top (green color code) to potentially unhealthiest at the bottom (red color code). Blue, yellow, and orange codes are used in descending order of health effects connecting the healthy green to the unhealthy red color code. Remember, nutrient values are not considered in determining scores. The total score for each food is provided in the far right column. Individual scores for each food specific to each of the three criteria is also provided. The scores range from 0 to 4 for herbicide/pesticide contamination (to reflect its 40% influence), and from 0 to three for glycemic load and effects on acid/base. Each individual score is also color coded for ease of analysis.

As an example, spinach rates a reasonably high score of 7 out of ten, earning maximum scores of 3 each for Glycemic load and acid/base. The 7 score is deceiving as the extremely poor rating of 1 out of 4 for herbicide/pesticide contamination make it a food choice that absolutely must be grown organically to be genuinely healthy. Celery rates perfectly for insulin response and a high 2.5 for acid base but a startling 0 for herbicide and pesticide contamination. If organic celery is purchased and consumed, celery goes from a nutritional health hazard to a health food. Some fruits were further categorized as domestic (dom.) or imported (imp.) since scores often differed depending on their import status.



Side note: Consuming organically grown food typically has little or no impact on nutrient status of fruits and vegetables. Some organic growers may conscientiously grow food in nutrient dense soils which will translate to improved nutrition but there is no guarantee. Organically grown does have a dramatic positive impact on chemical contamination of foods. This list enables consumers to make informed choices on what foods you may or may not choose to purchase from organic sources. The decision to purchase organic foods is also influenced by budget and availability. I always encourage the purchase organic foods when feasible.

I've identified a home meal delivery company [Sun Basket](#) that specializes in various eating styles and organic foods.

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Food	Herbicide / Pesticide	Glycemic Load	Acid / Base	Total score
Kelp/ Sea Weed	4	3	2.5	9.5
Asparagus	3.5	2.5	2.5	8.5
Onion	4	2.5	2	8.5
Cabbage	3.5	3	2	8.5
Lemon	2.5	3	3	8.5
Lime	2.5	3	2.5	8
Avocado	3.5	2.5	2	8
Broccoli	2.5	3	2.5	8
Grape Fruit	3	2.5	2.5	8
Watermelon	3	2	3	8

***Percentile Ranking 81st to 100th. Consume these foods freely with the exception of broccoli which should be organic. Lemons and limes are typically consumed in quantities that may not require they be organically grown unless making fresh squeezed juices like lemonade.

Food	Herbicide/ Pesticide	Glycemic Load	Acid / Base	Total score
Sweet Peas	3.5	2	2	7.5
Green Beans	2	3	2.5	7.5
Egg Plant	3	2.5	2	7.5
Pineapple	3.5	1.5	2.5	7.5
Cantaloupe (dom)	3	2	2.5	7.5
Mango	3	2	2.5	7.5
Kiwi	3	2	2.5	7.5

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Cauliflower	2.5	3	2	7.5
Cranberry	3	3	1	7
Carrots	2	3	2	7
Green Onions	2.5	3	1.5	7
Cantaloupe (imp)	2.5	2	2.5	7
Kale/Collards	1.5	3	2.5	7
Brussels Sprouts	3	2.5	1.5	7
Honey Dew	2.5	2	2.5	7
Mushrooms	3	2.5	1.5	7

***Percentile Ranking 61st to 80th. Kale and Collards must be organically grown. It's strongly suggested that green beans and suggested that green onions, Cauliflower and all melons be purchased from organic sources. Be aware that Pineapple may raise blood sugar. Other than the above cautions consume these foods freely

Food	Herbicide/ Pesticide	Glycemic Load	Acid / Base	Total score
Spinach	1	3	2.5	6.5
Sweet Potato	3	1.5	2	6.5
Summer Squash	2	2.5	2	6.5
Tomatoes	2.5	2.5	1.5	6.5
Lettuce	1	3	2.5	6.5
Oranges	2.5	2	2	6.5
Raspberries	2	2.5	2	6.5
Pears	2	2	2.5	6.5
Papaya	2.5	1.5	2.5	6.5
Nectarines (dom)	2	2.5	2	6.5
Winter Squash	2.5	2	1.5	6
Plums (dom)	2.5	2.5	1	6
Cucumbers	1	2.5	2.5	6
Bananas	2.5	1.5	2	6
Hot Peppers	2	2.5	2	6
Plums (imp.)	2	2.5	1.5	6

***Percentile Ranking 41st to 60th. Spinach, cucumbers and lettuce must be organically grown. Many great food choices in this 40th to 60th percentile ranking for health but be aware of some foods effects on blood sugar (sweet potato, Papaya and Bananas) and PH balance (domestic plums).

Food	Herbicide/ Pesticide	Glycemic Load	Acid / Base	Total score
Sweet Corn	3.5	0	2	5.5
Celery	0	3	2.5	5.5

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Grapes	.5	2	2.5	5
Blueberries (imp.)	2	2	1	5
Nectarines (imp.)	.5	2.5	2	5
Strawberries	.5	2.5	2	5
Peaches	.5	2.5	2	5
Cherries	1.5	2	1.5	5
Bell Peppers	.5	2.5	2	5

***Percentile Ranking 21st to 40th. Scrutinize this group carefully. All, with the exception of corn, are susceptible to herbicide/pesticide contamination. DO NOT consume Celery that is not certified organic. Corn is extremely glycemic and many of these foods are very acidic. Seek balance in your choices.

Food	Herbicide/ Pesticide	Glycemic Load	Acid / Base	Total score
White Potatoes	1.5	.5	2	4
Apples	0	2	2	4
Blueberries (dom)	1	2	1	4

***Percentile Ranking 1 to 20th. Consume these foods, with the possible exception of white Potatoes, only when grown organically. Potatoes have an extremely high glycemic load and should be avoided if high blood sugar is of concern. It's unfortunate that two of the healthiest foods on the planet nutrient wise (apples and blue berries) possess potential health drawbacks. Blueberries acidify the body and have a tendency toward chemical contamination. Non organic apples are filthy with unhealthy chemicals. Balance low performing food choices with organic, low glycemic, and alkalinizing foods to produce an overall healthier food profile.