

## *Module 11, Lesson 2 Handout:*

### **EWG Dirty Dozen & Clean Fifteen**

Every year, the Environment Working Group (EWG) analyzes USDA data about pesticide residue and ranks foods based on how much or little pesticide residue they have. Typically, it's the fruits and vegetables with the softest skin that absorb the most pesticides. It's suggested that you can reduce exposure to pesticides by 80% by always going organic with these 12 foods. EWG also has a Clean Fifteen list, which ranks the produce with the least amount of pesticide residue. This is a good guide to use if you can't buy everything organic.

Before we get into the lists, let's touch on the flaws, because this definitely isn't a perfect system. First of all, any produce is pretty much always better than no produce at all. If all you've got is a conventional apple, that's a better choice for a snack than organic cream filled cookies any day. There may also be flaws to the ranking system itself. This analysis doesn't take into consideration exactly what chemicals are detected and just how harmful they might be. The other reality is, pesticide residue tends to be pretty low, even on the highest ranking produce. In a USDA and FDA analysis, over 99% of produce sampled had pesticide residues far below Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) safety levels.

So, do we completely throw these lists out the window? Not necessarily, as they can still be a useful guide to shopping. As we aim to eat more organic produce, this list still gives us the best place to start. But let's reiterate again: most people need to eat more produce overall, conventional or organic. Only about 1 in 10 adults is eating 1½ to 2 cups of fruit and 2 to 3 cups of vegetables per day. And the last note: always wash all produce before eating. Okay, here are the lists.

**EWG updates the list every year. The following are the 2020 lists.**

#### **Dirty Dozen**

1. Strawberries
2. Spinach
3. Kale
4. Nectarines
5. Apples
6. Grapes
7. Peaches
8. Cherries

9. Pears
10. Tomatoes
11. Celery
12. Potatoes

### **Clean Fifteen**

1. Avocados
2. Sweet Corn
3. Pineapples
4. Onions
5. Papaya
6. Frozen sweet peas
7. Eggplant
8. Asparagus
9. Cauliflower
10. Cantaloupe
11. Broccoli
12. Mushrooms
13. Cabbage
14. Honey dew melon
15. Kiwi

Note that some sweet corn, papaya and summer squash sold in the United States is produced from genetically modified seeds, so recommend to buy organic varieties of these crops regardless of the pesticide residue ranking.