

Study Finds Conventional Milk Has High Levels of Antibiotic, Pesticide Residues Compared to Organic Milk

Researchers at Emory University have recently had a study published in the journal Public Health Nutrition that found that in comparison to organic milk, conventional milk samples contained more pesticide and antibiotic residues. In addition to that, some of the samples collected contained residue levels above the federally recognized limits for antibiotic residues. Study researchers explained...

To our knowledge, the present study is the first study to compare levels of pesticide in the U.S. milk supply by production method (conventional vs. organic)...It is also the first in a decade to measure antibiotic and hormone levels and compare them by milk production type."

Fewer Pesticides, Fewer Antibiotics

The study looked at 69 total samples of organic (34) and conventional (35) milk from all different regions of the United States. Of the 14 pesticides researchers tested for, both organic and conventional samples tested positive for legacy pesticides, chemicals that are no longer allowed in the United States but remain in our environment and food supply (DDT, DDE, and hexachlorobenzene). In addition to those, conventional milk also contained atrazine, chlorpyrifos, cypermethrin, diazinon, and permethrin.

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There was an even more clearcut difference between organic and conventional milk when researchers examined antibiotic residues. Organic milk samples did not test positive for antibiotics, while conventional milk samples tested positive for 5 different kinds of antibiotics, amoxicillin, oxytetracycline, sulfamethazine, sulfadimethoxine, and sulfathiazole. One of the conventional samples contained levels of amoxicillin above federal limits, while 37 percent of samples had higher than legal amounts sulfamethazine. Twenty-six percent of those samples also contained high levels of sulfathiazole.

Critics of this study have pointed out the involvement of The Organic Center, a non-profit research organization. Be that as it may, it's hard to deny the facts. Organic milk has fewer pesticides and antibiotics, and some conventional milk contains verified unsafe levels of these chemicals.

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Chasing the Pesticide Free Life

You would think that I would be urging you to live a pesticide-free life, seeing that this is Organic Lifestyle Magazine. And I will. Organic milk will always be better than conventional milk from the viewpoint of someone trying to avoid pesticides and unnecessary antibiotics in their food. It seems an added insult to conventional milk to reveal that some of that product isn't even meeting the basic federal requirements for those chemical residues. But it's difficult to realize that both types of milk contain pesticides banned in 1972 (DDT). These samples were collected in 2015, the same year the International Agency for Research on Cancer finally classified as "probably carcinogenic" and 43 years after the pesticide was banned. How pesticide free can we truly be at this point?

Sources:

- *Production-related contaminants (pesticides, antibiotics and hormones) in organic and conventionally produced milk samples sold in the USA – Cambridge Core*
- *Study finds residue of pesticides, antibiotics and growth hormone in non-organic milk – USA Today*
- *New study shows that choosing organic is an easy way to avoid pesticide, antibiotic, and synthetic growth hormone residues in milk – The Organic Center*
- *The differences between organic and conventional milk – Feed the Wisely*