

# Hazards in the Home

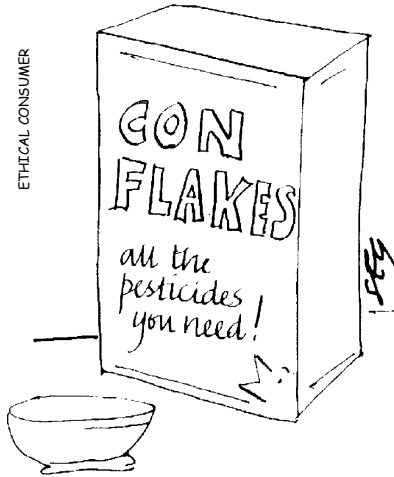
## Food - Chemical Residues

The amount of artificial fertilisers, pesticides and other chemicals used on crops is causing increasing concern about damage to the environment and human health from chemical residues left in food. Children are especially susceptible to these chemicals because of their lower body weight.

The widespread use of pesticide began in the 1940's, and although the hazards of pesticides are now widely recognised, statistics are hard to gather.

- The World Health Organisation estimates that at least three million people are poisoned by pesticides every year and more than 200,000 die.

*Every person on earth has absorbed at least 250 synthetic chemicals into their body.<sup>1</sup>*



- Up to 25 million agricultural workers are poisoned every year.<sup>1</sup>

- Genetically Modified crops are no answer. They are designed to need specific pesticides of their own, often of higher potency.
- Long term exposure to pesticides and toxins might cause Parkinson's disease in old age.

High concentrations of organophosphates and Lindane (both extremely toxic) are found in non-organic fruit and vegetables, especially pears, carrots and lettuce. Many pesticides are known endocrine disruptors—chemicals that lead to an increase in birth defects, sexual abnormalities and reproductive failure.<sup>1</sup>

### Alternatives

Organic ways of farming are just as productive as those using pesticides. The rise of the pesticide industry has helped transform agriculture into 'agribusiness' - to the detriment of small farmers who farm more ecologically but are not subsidised like "factory farms".

Therefore organic fruit and vegetables are more expensive and it is hard to find locally produced crops. Much of the organic food available has been flown great distances, which causes environmental problems, and makes it harder for local farmers to survive. There is obviously a dilemma here between buying local and buying organic, which can only be altered by people getting together and demanding change.

### Practical things you can do

Read the packaging. The Soil Association symbol means that food has been produced to certified standards, based on a system of farming which avoids the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides.

#### If you can't get organic food:



- Don't stop eating fresh fruit and veg. Health specialists say that the benefits still far outweigh the risks.
- Wash the surface of fruit and vegetables in water. This removes some pesticide residue.
- Peeling vegetables can remove more of the residue. Of course this still leaves residue in the flesh of the crop.
- Start your own food co-operative. Buying in bulk is cheaper and supports local communities and farms.

- Grow your own food in your garden, allotment or community garden.

### Contacts

- Organic Direct deliver organic fruit and veg to your door - 707 6949
- Liverpool's Farmers' Market, London Road, 1st & 3rd Saturday in the month - get there early.
- SUMA - Wholefood co-operative - cheap bulk buy, 01422 345513.
- Rice Lane City Farm - 530 1066.
- To get an allotment ring Liverpool City Council - 233 3000.

### Sources of Information

1. The New Internationalist. [www.newint.org/](http://www.newint.org/)

Merseyside HAZARDS & Environmental Centre  
Toxteth Town Hall, 15 High Park St. Liverpool L8 8DX.  
Tel: 0151-726 9595

e-mail: [centre@toxtethtownhall.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:centre@toxtethtownhall.freeserve.co.uk)