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Organic, Please

Converting "Conventional" Kids to Organic

By Jacqueline M. Duda

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Thoughts of adamant, vocal objections and never-ending tantrums may enter your mind at the idea of changing your toddler or preschooler's diet to an organic regime. This might cause you to rethink the benefits of avoiding conventionally grown and processed foods. Or, you may wish to wait until your children are a little older before making the switch. However, armed with some medical tips and a little parental savvy, your child can enjoy the taste of a healthier, more natural diet and reap benefits that will last a lifetime.

It's Never Too Late to Start

Sound impossible? Actually, the timing has never been better. "Very young children develop dietary patterns that will last a lifetime," says Dr. Alan Greene, pediatrician and clinical faculty member at Stanford University School of Medicine in Stanford, Calif., and founder and CEO of [DrGreene.com](#).

Often referred to as "metabolic imprinting," food cravings and eating habits are well established during the preschool years. Replacing conventionally processed foods with organic products will set your child up for lifelong success.

The family table is paramount. "The search for family identity is strong during the preschool years," says Dr. Greene. "Studies have shown that children model similar tastes molded from witnessing adult eating habits." And waiting until children are older will not necessarily make the switch to organics any easier.

It's All about Conditioning

Dr. Andrea Pennington, former medical director of Discovery Health and founder of the Pennington Institute of Health in Silver Spring, Md., describes the challenges parents face in converting young children to organics. "Fast food and snack products are more plentiful today than ever before," she says. "A kaleidoscope of red, orange and yellow colors used in marketing stimulates hunger in the brain, and these products flood our grocer's shelves and restaurants." Children become conditioned to crave these foods, forming habits that will strengthen as they grow older.

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