

DIGEST THIS: Survey Shows Fruit, Veggies Are High On Chemical Content

Plates loaded with pesticides

Garima Prasher | TNN

tics can prove fatal. "Pesticides are neurotoxins and can affect vital organs like the kidney and liver as well as the endocrine system. Some can cause food poisoning or allergic reactions. They're even more dangerous for pregnant women, passing through the placenta and causing genetic alterations," warns Hema Aravind, chief dietician, MS Ramaiah Memorial Hospital.

An apple a day needn't always keep the doctor away. According to the survey, both apples and oranges were found to have banned pesticide level of 140% above permissible limits. "The fruit are waxed with chemicals and pesticides to give them a longer life. Vegetables like cabbage and cauliflower, which are supposed to be very important for women's health, are dipped in two to three levels of pesticides to keep them fresh. Farming techniques like crop rotation have become a thing of the past," said Hema Sarat, nutrition and wellness adviser.

The solution lies in cleaning them thoroughly and buying from small vendors rather than supermarkets. "Small vendors grow vegetables and fruit on a small scale and not well-versed with the use of chemicals. Smaller the vegetable is in size, more organic it is," said Farhana Afroz, chief nutritionist, HCG Hospital.

"Kitchen gardening is the best solution to keep pesticides at bay. Vegetables can be grown easily in pots, even if you live in an apartment," she added.

TIMES VIEW

Though the survey findings ring alarm bells, it's practically impossible to do away with fruit and vegetables. Therefore, the next best option would be to exercise as much caution as possible. Simple things like washing them adequately before cooking could remove a lot of the chemical coating, if not all. Kitchen gardening is another option to explore. Also, customers must be wary of getting carried away by glossy packaging. Those spotless apples and oranges may not be as healthy as they appear. For all you know, the rough and rugged ones on the roadside could be a better bet. Regulating authorities should have checks in place to track such gross violation of permissible limits and take necessary action.

WATCH WHAT YOU EAT

■ **BRINJAL** >> **HEPTACHLOR**



0.48 860

■ **CABBAGE** >> **CYPERMETHRIN**



3.91 95.5

■ **OKRA** >> **CYPERMETHRIN**



0.31 55

■ **RICE** >> **CHLORFENVINFOS**



0.36 1324

■ **BANANA** >> **CHLORODANE**



0.15 54

■ **CAULIFLOWER** >> **ALDRIN**



0.42 320

■ **APPLE** >> **DICHLORVAS**



0.24 140

Figures reflect how common food items contain banned pesticides in quantities way above their permissible limits

ITEM	CONTENT: (part per million)
CHLORFENVINFOS	860
CYPERMETHRIN	95.5
CYPERMETHRIN	55
CHLORFENVINFOS	1324
CHLORODANE	54
ALDRIN	320
DICHLORVAS	140

% ABOVE LEGAL LIMITS

POSSIBLE AILMENTS

- Nervous system-related problems
- Endocrine disruption
- Liver dysfunction
- Convulsion
- Cancer
- Enzyme inhibition
- Kidney malfunction

DO YOUR BIT

- 1 Wash the fruit and vegetables in running water four or five times
- 2 Soak them in salt water for a few minutes. This will help kill germs
- 3 Wash them with **potassium permanganate solution** and wash again with fresh water before consuming them
- 4 Peel skin off fruit and vegetables whenever possible. Even if you plan to remove the skin from fruit and veggies, wash them first to eliminate pesticide residue
- 5 Buy **organic** fruit and vegetables if possible. Smaller the veggie is in size, more organic it is

REALITY CHECK

There is hardly any surveillance of residue pesticide levels in food products other than the one run by the ministry of agriculture

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The SC in its October 22 order has said that the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India should be made responsible for monitoring and exercising control on soft drinks. The problem is not only with vegetables

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Source: Union agriculture ministry