

# Washing your Fruits, Vegetables and Herbs

Unless your fruits and vegetables are organic, they probably grew in fields that were covered with pesticides and herbicides. Although the pesticide residues are considered to be at safe levels for consumption do we really want those extra chemicals on our foods?

What happened next? Well, chances are the food products were handled by several different hands before going to the warehouse, then to the grocery store. Bacteria such as Salmonella, E. Coli and Listeria may be present in your food products, whether they were grown locally, organically, conventionally or even grown right at your very school!

These “bad” bacteria need to be washed away from your food products so that you do not get food-borne illness!

How do you do that? Here’s what you can do:

- Always wash your hands properly before preparing food products
- Keep your fresh lettuces, herbs, fruit and vegetables away from uncooked meats
- If you grow (or buy) avoid moldy, mushy and bruised food products
- Make sure you thoroughly wash your food products to ensure you have removed all insects, soil, dirt or any other contaminants to ensure you are cooking safely!
- Even if a label claims an item is pre-washed, wash the pre-packaged fruit and vegetables just to be safe!
- Gently rub your food product under running water to clean it. Do not use any detergents, soaps, bleaches or toxic cleaners Water only!!!
- Firmer products (like sweet potatoes and squashes) can be scrubbed with a vegetable brush to ensure all dirt and potential hazards are removed
- Small items like raspberries can be washed in a colander and left to drain

**Remember: It is very important to wash your produce, especially if the product is going to be eaten raw!!!**