

**Children's Environmental Health Center of the Hudson Valley**  
New York Medical College | Valhalla, New York 10595  
P: 914-493-7585 | F: 914-594-2350

**CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CENTER OF THE HUDSON  
VALLEY**

**PROTECTING CHILDREN AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS**

[www.ChildrensEnvironment.org](http://www.ChildrensEnvironment.org)

**August 2017: Children's Health Advisory  
Dental Product Safety & Children's Health**

**Consumption of locally sourced food is beneficial to children's health**

It seems that the trend toward purchasing and consuming local foods is here to stay. Farmer's markets, farm to table restaurants and community gardens can be found throughout the Hudson Valley. Many schools and hospitals are now utilizing locally sourced food in their cafeterias. Parents that "buy local" give their children an opportunity to learn about where their food comes from, connect with local farmers and gain a greater sense of community.

**What is local?** According to the USDA, "local food is defined as the direct or intermediated marketing of food to consumers that is produced and distributed in a limited geographic area... More importantly, local food systems connect farms and consumers at the point of sale". The 2008 Farm Bill, which guides the US Department of Agriculture, defines local food as food that is grown and transported less than 400 miles, or within the same state.

**Reasons to purchase locally:**

- 1) Local food is more nutritious:** As soon as they're picked and packed, fruits and vegetables begin to lose nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. Studies show that locally grown produce contains more vitamins than produce shipped from a further distance. Local farmers can allow fruits and vegetables to grow at their own pace, with lots of nutrients that encourage their roots to grow deeper. Additionally, produce from large farms is often picked and allowed to ripen in transit, providing less nutrient value.
- 2) Locally grown food tastes better:** Foods available from farmer's markets and community supported agriculture (CSA)s are usually sold within a few days, maximizing ripeness and flavor while minimizing damage from shipping and handling. Small, local farms often grow

uncommon varieties that may be more flavorful than standard grocery store produce. Many foods, such as fruits, taste best during short seasons.

- 3) Purchasing local food is safer:** Smaller, local farms that sell directly to consumers are more likely to use organic and sustainable growing practices that don't include pesticides and herbicides. Because food from local sources has a much shorter transit time than supermarket produce, it stays fresh longer and is less likely to carry foodborne pathogens.
- 4) Supports the local economy:** Consumers who shop at farmer's markets often end up spending within the community and develop a strong connection with local growers and businesses.
- 5) Children's diet quality is better:** Research shows that children whose parents frequently purchase locally grown produce consume more daily servings of fruits and vegetables. Young adults who understand and value sustainable food practices are also likely to have a more nutritious diet.
- 6) Local foods benefit the environment:** By purchasing food that's grown locally, you're helping to maintain our local farmland and green and/or open space.

#### **Where to find local food:**

Farmer's markets are springing up all over. Watch for signs. Check them out! Plus, the United States Department of Agriculture website is a terrific resource:

Farmer's market or CSA: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional/food-directories>

Farm to table restaurants: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional/food-directories>

Community gardens: <https://peoplesgarden.usda.gov/gardens>

#### Sources:

- DeMarco M. (2014). Locally Grown Fruit and Vegetable Purchasing Habits and the Association With Children's Diet. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 9, 372-387. doi:10.1080/19320248.2014.929545
- Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, P.L. 110-246, §6015.
- [https://www.nal.usda.gov/aglaw/local-foods#quicktabs-aglaw\\_pathfinder=1](https://www.nal.usda.gov/aglaw/local-foods#quicktabs-aglaw_pathfinder=1)
- Hunter D, Foster M, McArthur JO, Ojha,R, Petocz P, Samman S. (2011). Evaluation of the Micronutrient Composition of Plant Foods Produced by Organic and Conventional Agricultural Methods. *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition*, 51(6), 571-582. doi:10.1080/10408391003721701
- Martinez S. Varied Interests Drive Growing Popularity of Local Foods, *Amber Waves*, USDA ERS, December 2010
- Martinez S. (2010, May). Local Food Systems: Concepts, Impacts, and Issues. Retrieved December 12, 2017, from [www.ers.usda.gov](http://www.ers.usda.gov)

- Pelletier JE. (2013). Positive attitudes toward organic, local, and sustainable foods are associated with higher dietary quality among young adults. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and dietetics*, 113(1). doi:10.1016/j.jand.2012.08.021
- Wunderlich SM, Feldman C, Kane S, Hazhin T. (2008). Nutritional quality of organic, conventional, and seasonally grown broccoli using vitamin C as a marker. *International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition*, 59(1), 34-45. doi:10.1080/09637480701453637