

# Shopping for Nutrition



by Suzanne Swearingen, DOM, AP

The food industry is cashing in on the public's new health and disease prevention awareness with such buzz words as organic, green and all natural. Marketing for health may lead to a greater variety in the marketplace, but with all the misleading labels and advertising, it also brings confusion. What do all these terms really mean? How does one shop wisely without breaking the bank? With some basic knowledge, one can shop more intelligently and healthily.

## Avoiding the Instant Foods

The first step to a healthier life is to avoid instant foods. This unofficial food group consists mostly of powdered or processed foodstuff that transforms with the addition of one or two ingredients. These foods are far from their natural state and are full of preservatives. Minimally prepared or frozen foods are a step in the right direction, but should be consumed in

moderation due to their high sodium content and diminished nutrient value. It is best to incorporate as many fresh, raw and whole foods into the diet as possible. The body readily recognizes nutrients in foods that are in their most natural state. A good rule of thumb is to read labels and avoid buying things that have unpronounceable ingredients. Also, look for "certified organic," "hormone/antibiotic free" and "no artificial ingredients" on the label.

## Don't Be Fooled

The food industry has become very clever at disguising lesser-quality items as healthy and charging more; be aware of slippery descriptions and terms used in labels, such as "all natural," "made with organic," "green," "part of a healthy diet," "doctor recommended" or other vague and uncertified descriptions. These terms are not regulated and are often used to mislead consumers into thinking they are getting a healthy or superior prod-

uct. Certified organic products must be produced under strict regulations and are labeled with a special stamp.

## Shop Wisely

A common complaint is that eating healthily is expensive. Eating well does not have to be costly. Knowing how to decide between organic and conventional food will allow for better eating on a budget. When it comes to fruits and vegetables, organic is always best. However, if one must choose, then select standard produce with a peel or skin that is not consumed, such as bananas, oranges, squash and avocados. Berries, apples, peaches, tomatoes and other thin-skinned fruits or vegetables should be organic. Organic meats can be costly and difficult to obtain. The best alternative is to look for meat from animals that have been raised without hormones and antibiotics. These are generally priced the same as other meats and are truly better in quality. Other animal products, such as dairy and eggs, are worth the extra cost for organic in both flavor and health benefit. If organic is not available, then buy products that come from "free-range" or "free-roaming" animals. Making smarter decisions on what you put in your body today will save you from paying someone else to fix it later. Eating healthily is cheaper.

*For more info, call Suzanne Swearingen, DOM, AP, at the Alternative Healthcare Clinic in Myrtle Beach, 843-692-9243, or at South Strand Cardiology in Surfside at 843-293-2700. See ads pages 11 & 27.*



In the Grand Strand and Pee Dee areas, there are several sources for healthy, cost-effective products. Some local stores and businesses that offer a good selection of organic food and products include:

## Health Food Stores

Bay Naturals, Myrtle Beach (See ad page 48)  
New Life Natural Foods, North Myrtle Beach (See ad page 48)  
The Healthy Food Store, Florence  
To Your Health, Pawleys Island (See ad page 10)

## Regional Grocery Stores Carrying Organic and Natural Food

Food Lion - Nature's Place Centers  
Kroger  
Lowe's Foods  
Piggly Wiggly

## Farmers' Markets

Lee's Farmers' Market, Murrells Inlet  
Ovis Hill Farmers' Market, Myrtle Beach, Florence and Hartsville (See ad, page 40)  
The Farm Store, Sumter and local farmers' markets and roadside markets everywhere.