



## A Message to Healthcare Providers from Dr. Brittany Blockman on **ORGANIC FROM THE START**



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Brittany Blockman, MD, MA, FAAP, is the Pediatric Integrative Medicine Program Medical Director at St. Luke’s Children’s Hospital in Boise, ID, as well as the founder and CEO of MotherWit Integrative Medicine. She graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine, and is an award-winning board-certified pediatrician, integrative health specialist, and clinical researcher. Dr. Blockman is one of the leading experts on integrative approaches to pediatric chronic illness and health optimization.

As healthcare providers, our time with patients and families is limited, so we may find it challenging to fit in conversations around valuable preventive health topics, such as healthy nutrition, which is important to discuss beginning in your patient’s infancy. However, it’s essential to consider the impacts of food beyond just its nutritional value. Particularly as more parents are feeding organic foods to their children (one in three baby food dollars is spent on organic<sup>1</sup>), it is valuable as healthcare providers to be aware of the latest research in this space and also understand what USDA Organic certification entails to inform these patient conversations.

The first food an infant consumes is some form of milk – either in the form of breast milk or formula. When a mother isn’t able to breastfeed, choosing an organic infant formula may be beneficial as health risks from exposure to chemicals, such as conventional pesticides, antibiotics, and artificial growth hormones, are still relatively unknown.



When a food is certified USDA Organic, it means the ingredients are grown without using toxic and persistent pesticides, sewage sludge, or synthetic fertilizers, and animals treated with antibiotics or growth hormones cannot be used.

*Some science suggests that an organic diet can limit pesticide exposures. A recent publication by Hyland and colleagues concluded that following an organic diet for just one week resulted in significant reductions of several pesticide metabolites in the urine of 16 US individuals.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, a few other studies have found pesticide metabolites in the urine of children consuming a conventional diet.<sup>3,4,5,6</sup>*

The primary ingredient in conventional infant formula is non-fat cow’s milk, and a recent study demonstrated that organic full-fat cow’s milk contained significantly less current-use pesticide residues than conventional full-fat milk.<sup>7</sup> The findings were:



- At least 1 in 4 conventional milk samples tested positive for one type of pesticides that are banned for use in all US milk.
- Levels of the growth hormones bGH and IGF-1 were three times higher in conventional milk than organic milk.\*
- The organic samples showed no antibiotic residues.
- Consuming organic milk can reduce the risk of human exposure to antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

An organic diet (whether mom’s diet while breastfeeding or formula-fed infants consuming organic formula) may reduce antibiotics, growth hormone, and conventional pesticide exposure.

\* None of the pesticide residue levels in the conventional milk were above the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) limits

The Happy Baby® Organic Infant Formula is my choice for an infant formula, given that it meets the following criteria:

- ✓ *Meets all FDA registration requirements*
- ✓ *Provides complete nutrition for babies 0-12 months*
- ✓ *Contains fatty acids DHA and ARA, which support brain and eye health*
- ✓ *Contains dual prebiotics that promote healthy gut bacteria, such as Bifidobacterium, and promotes softer and regular stools similar to those of breastfed infants*
- ✓ *Is USDA organic certified*
- ✓ *Does not contain corn syrup sweeteners*
- ✓ *There is no BPA in the formula container*



I also appreciate that Happy Family Organics® has an incredible free chat platform staffed by Registered Dietitians and Lactation Consultants, to provide free lactation and child nutrition support to families, seven days per week at [happyfamilybrands.com/freesupport](https://happyfamilybrands.com/freesupport).

## ≡ HELPFUL TIPS FOR HEALTHY CONVERSATIONS ≡

Here are tips to facilitate a healthy conversation when a parent asks for your recommendation or opinion about organic or conventional infant formula and food:

- 1 Explain that parents may want to consider impacts of the food we eat beyond its nutritional value, as we don't know the long term-impact of certain pesticides.
- 2 Let parents know their right to bring an organic infant formula to the hospital if they're concerned their baby may be fed a conventional formula during his or her stay.
- 3 Reassure families that there are FDA-approved organic infant formulas on the market, such as Happy Baby® Organic Infant Formula, which provide complete nutrition for babies.
- 4 Share organic resources, such as *The Environmental Working Group's Dirty Dozen and Clean Fifteen*, which help prioritize organic food to buy based on the produce that contains the highest and lowest amounts of pesticide residue. This may be valuable to breastfeeding moms, given that what mom consumes may pass through to infants via breastmilk.

Whenever possible, I think it is our duty to be conscious of parents' curiosity around feeding organic formula and foods and be prepared to present them with the science available. This means whether or not we personally choose an organic, conventional, or mixed diet, we should provide parents with the facts to empower them to make informed dietary choices for their child. This includes understanding USDA Organic regulations as well as being aware of the relevant studies detailed above.

All my best,

*Brittany Blockman*

### REFERENCES

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