
Finding Organic and Healthful Food While Living with MCS

People living with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) need to find food that is safe and healthy, even though it often requires extra preparation. Fragrances, cleaning supplies, pesticides, packaging, preservatives, and other exposures while shopping or cooking can create barriers and make it harder to find the right products. Here are some practical strategies for locating healthy and organic food:

Get in touch with nearby organic farms

Buying directly from a nearby organic farm can give you more insight into how food is produced, harvested, stored, and packaged. Some farms provide weekly produce boxes via home delivery, farm-gate pickup, or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. Before placing an order, make sure to ask whether scented products, pesticides, treated packaging, or fragranced cleaning supplies are used.

Make local and Canadian-grown food choices

Purchasing locally produced and Canadian-grown food may help families find seasonal options and support local farmers as food prices are on the rise. Look for signs indicating the province in which the produce was grown or labels such as "Product of Canada". Especially when you buy directly from farms, farmers' markets, food cooperatives, or through bulk-buying programs, seasonal Canadian fruits and vegetables may be more affordable.

Go to farmers' markets when it's less crowded

Meeting growers and asking direct questions can be beneficial at farmers' markets. One way to lessen exposure to crowds, scents, car exhaust, and nearby prepared food vendors is to arrive early or visit during less busy times. Additionally, outdoor markets might have better ventilation.

Look into organic grocery delivery

You may be able to save time with curbside pickup, home delivery, and online ordering. Customers can filter for organic products and add packaging or substitution guidelines to many

services. Request that groceries not be placed anywhere near areas where scented items are stored, and that they be handled without fragrance.

Select uncomplicated, minimally processed foods

Foods with short ingredient lists, such as grains, beans, and fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables, may make it simpler to spot and steer clear of potentially problematic ingredients. When fresh produce is out of season, frozen organic produce can be a practical and reasonably priced alternative. You can also shop fresh in the summer months, and freeze your produce so that it is available to you during the winter.

Understand food labels

"Natural," "organic," and "pesticide-free" are not synonymous terms. While terms like "natural" might reveal less about a product's manufacturing process, products labeled "organic" in Canada must adhere to strict regulations. Reading ingredient lists and questioning producers can help you make educated decisions.

Inquire about how your food is handled and grown

While organic certification can be useful, it does not ensure that every product or retail setting will be appropriate for every individual with MCS. Inquire about the use of pesticides, cleaning supplies, storage spaces, packaging materials, and whether employees use scented products whenever you can. Food should be cleaned and stored according to your preferences. Some people find it beneficial to wash produce, remove outer packaging, and move food into containers they can handle. Allowing the packaging to air out in a well-ventilated area may help if it has absorbed strong odours. Ensure that food is handled and stored safely at all times.

Consider home-grown foods

If your space and health permits, gardens or containers can be used to grow herbs, leafy greens, tomatoes, and other produce. Growing food at home gives you more control over the soil, fertilizers, pest control techniques, and handling.

Create a reputable source list

Make a list of the farms, shops, delivery services, goods, and suppliers that have been successful for you and feel free to share it with others. Everybody has unique dietary requirements. It is crucial to select options based on your personal needs, tolerance, budget, and accessibility because organic food is not always available for everyone. Healthy eating can be made easier with small adjustments, trustworthy sources, and open communication with food providers.