

## Modify This!

Most people in North America are eating genetically modified (GM) foods at every meal, and yet have not idea that what they are eating has been genetically modified. GMOs, or genetically modified organisms, are ubiquitous in our food environment and have been for about 10 years.

What exactly is a GMO?

Well, it isn't an extension of natural breeding and it isn't a process that can happen in nature. Essentially it's a swapping of genes between species. Genetically engineered DNA is literally blasted into a plant. The worrisome part is that current GM foods get these new genes from bacteria, viruses and other organisms. The process of creating a GM crop can produce massive changes in the natural functioning of the plants' DNA.

Here's the Problem:

GMO's are dangerous for us but they're also bad for the environment. In fact, the American Academy of Environmental Medicine urges doctors to prescribe non-GMO diets for all patients. Why? Because human studies have shown that the genes inserted into GM soy can transfer into the DNA of bacteria living our intestines. If that isn't enough to scare you off, the toxic insecticide produced by GM corn was found in the blood of pregnant women and their unborn fetuses.

Consider this: Approximately 91% of soy, 88% of canola, 85% of corn and 90% of sugar beets planted in the US are genetically engineered. Other GM crops include Hawaiian papaya (about 50%), and a small amount of zucchini and yellow squash. GM soy and corn are found in about 80% of processed foods.

What does all this mean? It means that unless you're choosing organic or non-GMO options, those tortilla chips you've been munching on, not to mention the cookies, crackers, snack chips, frozen dinners and snacks, and other processed foods are full of GM ingredients, most likely corn and soy and ingredients derived from corn and soy. In addition, there are hundreds of foods produced with genetically engineered cooking agents, food additives, and enzymes. Ask your favorite restaurant what oil they are using. Chances are it's canola oil. Even non-chain upscale restaurants use canola oil. Why? Because it's cheap!

How To Avoid GM Foods:

The best thing to do is to eat organic food. No organic foods are genetically modified. If you can't eat organic food, then do your best to avoid the GM food crops listed above.

FYI, if sugar is on the label and it doesn't say "cane" sugar, its GM sugar from sugar beets.

If you're not going to buy organic, then look for the "Non-GMO Project" verified seals on products. And don't buy products from companies that use GM ingredients. Trader Joe's, for example, does not use GM ingredients. This also means that you're going to have to avoid most packaged, processed food products and that includes fast food. But guess what? That's what you should be doing anyway, at least 80% of time anyway. That's right, at least 80% of the time, you should be eating fresh, whole, unprocessed foods. Here's my mantra: If Mother Nature didn't make it and you can't pronounce it, DON'T EAT IT!!

Buy Non-GMO!

More than 50% of Americans would choose not to buy or eat genetically modified foods if they were labeled. Why aren't they labeled? Political reasons, mostly. But we can change that. If just a small percentage of American consumers (5%) switched to non-GMO brands, major food companies would quickly replace GM ingredients. A consumer driven tipping point was reached in Europe a decade ago and in spite of government approvals, major food companies replaced GM ingredients. The US tipping point is estimated to be as little as 15 million conscious shoppers choosing non-GMO brands.

To learn more about avoiding GMOs at your grocery store and while dining out, visit **[www.NonGMOShoppingGuide.com](http://www.NonGMOShoppingGuide.com)**. To learn more about the history, politics and dangers of GMOs, visit **[www.responsibletechnology.org](http://www.responsibletechnology.org)**.

Geri received training with best-selling author and GMO expert, Jeffrey Smith, as a speaker in the dangers of GMOs. She is available to lecture to your group, organization, school or club.