

## Hormones in Food

There has been a lot of debate about hormones in food causing moms to wonder what food is safe to buy at the grocery store. Bovine somatotropin (rbST) is a natural growth hormone in cows. rbST is a man-made copy of this hormone used by some dairy farmers to help increase the production of milk. The United States Food and Drug Administration approved the use of rbST in 1993. Controversy surrounding rbST includes the question as to whether the hormone could increase the risk of breast cancer. In 1999, the European Union and Canada banned rbST.

### ***Top 5 Companies Selling rbST-Free Dairy Products***

1. **Dannon:**  
USA Today reports that the company claims it will eliminate rbST before the end of the year. "We are listening to customers," spokesman Michael Neuwirth says. Neuwirth says the company receives a few dozen e-mails per month from consumers on the topic.
2. **General Mills:**  
The company released a statement that says Yoplait® yogurt products will not include milk from cows treated with rbST by August of 2009.
3. **Walmart:**  
The retailer released a statement in 2008 saying that its Great Value brand milk now comes exclusively from cows that have not been treated with artificial growth hormones.
4. **Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Market:**  
The company website says that Fresh & Easy milk and butter comes from California cows that have not been treated with rbST.
5. **Meijer:**  
The retail chain's corporate office released a statement in 2008 saying that it had begun offering house-brand milk from cows that have not been treated with rbST.

The FDA found no difference between milk from cows treated with rbST and from cows not treated with the hormone, according to the National Dairy Council. The American Cancer Society does not have a formal stance regarding rbST, but supports open and fair regulatory oversight of products containing the hormone and continued research about its potential links to cancer.

### ***What Moms Can Do about Hormones in Food***

Milk, meat, and soy often top the lists of foods containing hormones which may be cause for concern.

The FDA says there are no health risks for humans from rbST, but studies indicate the hormone may harm cows, reports USA Today. In addition to being banned in many European countries, using synthetic growth hormones in dairy cows is also not allowed in Japan, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Luckily, an increasing number of companies are stocking rbST-free milk, so moms often have the choice as to whether to buy hormone-free dairy products.

The beef industry uses growth hormones each year in around 80% of beef cattle in the U.S., according to the Center for Food Safety. The U.S. Department of Agriculture does not permit the use of these hormones in chickens or pigs.

Six hormones besides rbST are allowed in beef cattle, including estradiol and zeranol. The Center for Food Safety says that residues from these hormones present in meat could pose negative health risks including cancer and impacts on child development.

For moms who are skeptical of hormones in beef but who are not interested in becoming vegetarians, another option is to shop organic. Organic farmers do not use synthetic hormones on cows. However, the Mayo Clinic notes that the USDA does not claim that organic products are safer or more nutritious than conventionally grown foods.

Soy has become another food up for debate as parents worry that naturally occurring chemicals called phytoestrogens will behave like estrogen in a child's body. Pediatrician Dr. Cara Natterson sets the record straight about soy:

"Here's the bottom line: organic soy produce has never been proven to have estrogen-like effects. There are entire countries whose populations subsist on soy as their mainstay of protein, and the men are not running around with breasts. However, it is very prudent to consider the issues related to EDs and genetic modification of soybeans when sipping on a soy latte or snacking on edamame.

"Does this mean you should stop giving your kid soybeans? No, but I believe in everything in moderation. If you do notice a change in your child's body, stop the soy and see your pediatrician. However, most kids are not that sensitive to it. And it's always better to go organic when you can, because that cuts down the risk that the soybeans are genetically modified."

There seems to be both discrepancies and unanswered questions about the actual effects of hormones in food, but moms armed with information can make more informed decisions at the supermarket.

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### ***Related Momlogic Stories on Hormones in Food***

1. [The Green Pregnancy Diet](#)
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### ***Additional Resources for Hormones and Food***

- [The Center for Food Safety](#)
- [United States Department of Agriculture](#)
- [Cornell University](#)