

March is nutrition month in Canada. I try to eat nutritious food, staying away from pre-packaged food as much as possible, but sometimes eating healthy food and maintaining a sustainable diet seems complicated: organic vs. conventional, meat vs. vegetarian.

One of the best ways to eat fresh, nutritious and low carbon foods is grow them yourself. Whether a container garden on the balcony or a large vegetable garden in the backyard some vegetables are not too difficult or time consuming to grow. Try beans, cherry tomatoes, lettuce or carrots, if you are just starting out. As you gain experience you can add more vegetables to your garden plans.

Stay away from pre-packaged foods as much as possible. I know this is a challenge. I have two active kids and it can be difficult to always have enough fruits and vegetables and home-baked goods to satisfy them. We are often on the go and it is so much easier to grab something out of the cupboard when I have run out of time. However, preparing food at home and focussing on fresh fruit and vegetables is certainly the best choice.

If you'd like to have a nutritious and sustainable diet, become vegetarian. The truth is that a plant based diet is just as complete as a diet that includes meat and can reduce you carbon footprint by 1.5 tonnes. If you really love meat, then try to reduce you meat-based meals as much as possible and focus on chicken and eggs as they are less carbon intensive than beef and dairy.

I try to buy organic whenever possible, but the truth is this may not be the most carbon-friendly alternative. When it comes to plant crops, organic is more carbon-friendly as conventional fertilizers are carbon intensive.

With poultry farms, conventional farms tend to be more carbon friendly than organic farms. Organic farms are more poultry friendly, however. In conventional farming, chickens are kept in very small cages and can't move about. It doesn't take much to fatten them up. Chickens given more space take more time and more feed to grow to market size. I suppose if your only concern is your carbon footprint then conventional chickens are for you. However, if you are concerned about farming practices, then going vegetarian or eating less meat while making more ethical choices is best.

These are just a few of the many choices we face with each trip to the market or grocery store.

There was recently an informative article published at New Scientist, “ [What is your dinner doing to the climate?](#) ” if you would like to learn more.

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