



Health is a treasure

The Joy of Soy

by Ramona Lee, RD

Soybeans represent a nutritional powerhouse. Not only high in many vitamins and minerals, but also their rich protein content sets them apart from other plant foods.

Called in the Orient “the meat from the field,” soybeans are one plant-based food exceptionally high in protein, 38% by weight, balanced with 30% of carbohydrate, 18% of fat. Half a cup of cooked soybeans provide 14 grams of high quality protein, equivalent to the amount found in 2 large eggs. Protein quality in soybeans is rated as top along with milk and egg protein.


Most of the fat in soybeans is unsaturated. The polyunsaturated fat content of soybeans is of interest because it includes Linolenic acid, an omega-3 fatty acid (7% of the total fat content). Soybeans are one of the few plant sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids are essential nutrients for infants, and are also important to maintain normal function of the brain. This type of fatty acid is known to help reduce the risk of both heart disease and cancer.

Isoflavones: Soybeans and the foods made from them are a rich source of special compounds called isoflavones. Isoflavones may work in several ways to fight a range of diseases, including heart disease and cancer. They may also help relieve menopause symptoms and promote bone health. As scientists learn more about isoflavones, it becomes more and more clear that adding soy foods to the diet is a smart decision. Soybeans are the only food that contain significant amounts of these isoflavones. The isoflavones are sometimes referred to as phytoestrogens because they are similar to the female hormone estrogen.

Menopause Symptoms: Recent clinical work found that when women who were fed 45 grams of soy flour per day, benefited by having menopause symptoms reduced by approximately 40%.

Bone Health: Isoflavones may help to prevent osteoporosis. Eating soy foods may be one easy way to help build strong bones and to lower the

Of all temporal possessions health is the most precious. Wealth, learning, and honor are dearly purchased at the loss of health. None of these can secure happiness if health is lacking. CDF 20



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risk of osteoporosis. Soy isoflavone has proven to be effective in preventing the bones from weakening. In comparison to other high quality proteins, soy protein causes less calcium to be excreted in the urine.

Cancer:

Soybean isoflavones may work several ways to reduce cancer risk or to interfere with the cancer process. According to studies, just one serving of soy per day may reduce the risk of cancer. Soybeans are rich in several anti-cancer causing agents.



Heart Health: Studies conducted over the past 25 years have shown that soy protein lowers cholesterol. Soy foods may play a role in a heart-healthy diet for the following reasons:

- Soybeans are very low in saturated fat and like all plant foods are cholesterol-free.
- Soy protein directly lowers blood cholesterol.
- Soy may interfere with oxidation of LDL(bad) cholesterol.

Diabetes: More recently, scientists have suggested that soy foods may benefit those with diabetes in the following ways:

- Soybeans have a low blood sugar index.
- Soybeans are rich in soluble fiber.
- Soy protein may help to reduce blood cholesterol levels.
- Soy protein may improve renal function.

Kidney Health: Soy foods can easily help renal patients meet their elevated protein needs since it is of the highest quality, but it does not appear to have the same detrimental effects on kidney function as animal proteins.

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