

Title: The Hidden Dangers of Consuming Too Much Soy

Written and Submitted by: Laura M. Sands

Contact: LauraMSands@gmail.com or 909-495-3339

Date: May 10, 2011

Word Count: 713 words

The Hidden Dangers of Consuming Too Much Soy

By Laura M. Sands

Can eating too much soy be bad for your health? This may come as shocking news to some who believe soy to be a healthy protein source, but the answer to this question is yes. Those who favor soy for its health benefits must also be aware of what consuming too much of it can do to the body.

What is Soy?

The soybean, also referred to as the soya bean, is a legume originally found in East Asia. It is a common food source in Asia and other parts of the world, as it is an inexpensive source of plant-based protein. Vegetarians, vegans and other health-conscious individuals often use the soybean or processed soy products as a replacement for animal protein and as a replacement for dairy products, such as milk and cheese.

The Most Common Health Concerns Related to Soy Consumption

Early proponents of soy foods hailed it as a healthy alternative to animal protein. However, as processed soy food products increase in popularity, so do health concerns. Some of the most commonly reported symptoms of consuming too much soy are:

- Thyroid dysfunction
- Reproductive problems
- Cancer
- Malnutrition
- Weakening of the immune system
- Digestive disorders
- Heart disease
- Food allergies
- Cognitive impairment

As reported by Scientific American in November, 2009, pregnant women who consume too much soy may also risk healthy fetal development. It is because the soybean is very high in plant-based estrogen that researchers, such as Heather B. Patisaul, a developmental biologist in the Department of Biology at North Carolina State University, believe that consuming too much soy can cause such hormonal imbalances in fetuses as to impact a child's actual brain chemistry and future behavior. Also, because soy is a common ingredient in many infant formulas, new mothers are advised to carefully research the risks versus the benefits of soy consumption.

Conflicting and Confusing Information About Soy

Title: The Hidden Dangers of Consuming Too Much Soy

Written and Submitted by: Laura M. Sands

Contact: LauraMSands@gmail.com or 909-495-3339

Date: May 10, 2011

Word Count: 713 words

On the one hand, the federal Food and Drug Administration touts soy as being a healthy, natural food helpful in reducing the risk of heart disease. Yet, other health advocates, such as Dr. Mary Enig, maintain that soy-based foods commonly sold in American supermarkets and health food stores are not actually natural foods, nor is consuming these products good for one's health. Among other reasons cited from this side of the soy argument, is that soybeans grown in the U.S. often hail from genetically modified crops. Also, that the processing of soy is not the same as it is in Asia where it is allowed to ferment for at least one year while toxins naturally found in the legume are allowed to diminish before the soy is sold as a food source.

In a 2008 letter to the Food and Drug Administration, the American Heart Association retracted its previous claim that soy lowered cholesterol and worked to reduce heart disease. Despite this fact, several manufacturers continue to label food products containing soy as a health benefit. Nutritionists, such as Dr. Kaayla Daniel, are lobbying to have these labels removed and replaced, instead, with warning labels on food products containing soy.

How Much is Too Much Soy?

After a rash of infant hospitalizations for brain damage due to a B1 vitamin deficiency, which was linked to soy formula, the Israeli health ministry began warning against babies being fed soy formula. Children 18 and under are further advised to not eat soy more than three times per week and to not have more than one serving of soy in a single day. Adults are also advised to exercise extreme caution in consuming soy due to its possible linkage to breast cancer and fertility problems.

With previous claims about soy being scientifically rejected and with new research indicating that consuming it may actually present a health risk, individuals who purchase soy foods are advised to be very cautious about eating too much of it. As health advocates work to spread the word about the hidden dangers of soy, food manufacturers with an interest in the bottom line continue to tout it as a healthy choice. Research and information about soy is within the public's reach. However, it's up to each individual targeting optimal health to educate themselves on the possible health risks of consuming too much soy.