

FAQ: Health Benefits of Soy

Answers to why soy is a beneficial addition to a healthy diet

How much soy should I have in my diet?

The FDA approved a health claim in 1999 advising the consumption of 25 grams of soy protein per day, which is about 2-3 servings of soy. This can be obtained through a variety of ways including soymilk, edamame, and tofu. (1)

Why should I include soy in my diet?

Soy is an incredible and unique food. Soy is the only complete plant protein that contains all 9 essential amino acids, and has other added benefits such as omega-3s and isoflavones. Including soy in your diet is an easy way to increase nutrition in your diet. It is low in saturated fat, cholesterol-free, and high in many important nutrients, such as vitamins, calcium and potassium. (1)

SunOpta has compiled a recent list of research studies and their findings showing the health effects of soy in addition to the inherent beneficial characteristics. The studies have been well documented and soy has been found to help with many common chronic diseases, including coronary heart disease, various forms of hormonal cancer (such as breast cancer and prostate cancer), lung disease, and osteoporosis. (1)

What does complete protein mean and what are essential amino acids?

A complete protein is one that contains all 9 essential amino acids and contains adequate proportions of them so that they can be used by the body. Soy is the only plant protein that is considered to be a complete protein, meaning it is equivalent to animal protein in protein quality. (2)

Essential amino acids are very important for the body to function, but cannot be synthesized by the body, meaning they must be included in your diet. Amino acids are the building blocks of protein, helping to make muscles and enzymes. This is why soyfoods are an excellent addition to a healthy diet. (2)

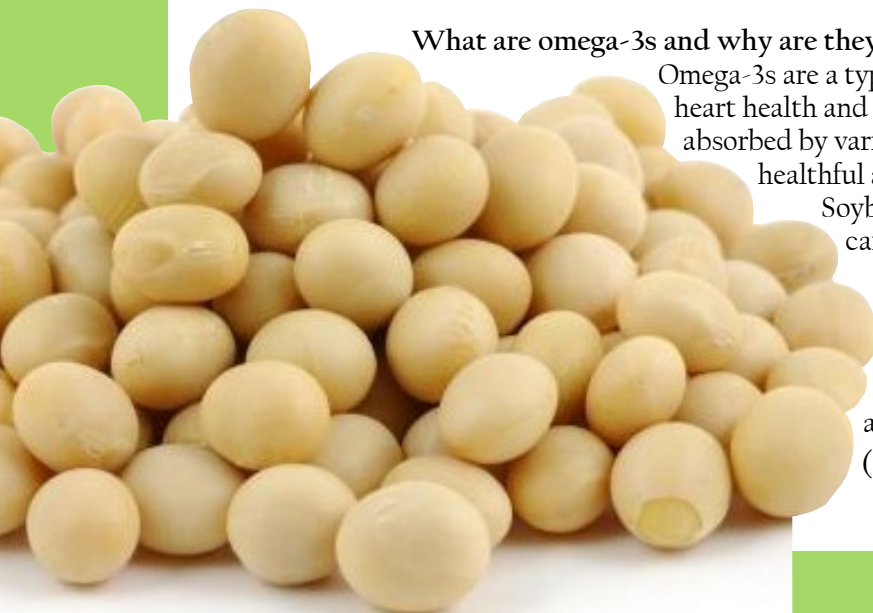
What are isoflavones and why are they important?

Isoflavones are a type of phytochemical found in chick peas and legumes, but soy has the most concentrated amount of them. Although they secrete a small amount of estrogen, they act differently in the body than human estrogens and do not have estrogen-like effects. They assist in hormone regulation and balance, which is why they are believed to help with hormone-related problems in the body, including breast cancer, symptoms of menopause and prostate cancer. (3)

What are omega-3s and why are they important?

Omega-3s are a type of polyunsaturated fat that are associated with heart health and are most often found in fish. They are readily absorbed by various tissues in the body where they carry out healthful activities, especially decreasing inflammation. Soybeans contain alpha-linolenic acid (LNA) which can be converted into omega-3s in the body. (4)

Research suggests that omega-3s mitigate several risk factors for heart disease, may reduce the risk for diabetes, can increase bone density, and can be useful against various types of cancer. (5)



Why is soy “heart healthy”?

There are many studies around the effects of soy on heart health, and overall soy protein has been found to directly lower cholesterol. This is important to heart health because soy reduces the “bad” cholesterol (LDL), which is a risk factor for coronary heart disease. It is also believed that soy may raise “good” cholesterol (HDL), lower triglyceride levels, and improve coronary artery health. (1)

Why is soy beneficial for osteoporosis?

Recent findings suggest that isoflavones, found in soy, are beneficial in the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis. Isoflavones minimize bone loss, enhance bone formation, and increase bone density. (6)

Why is soy beneficial for lung disease?

In a recent study, a positive correlation between soy intake and lung function was found, and it was also concluded that there was an inverse relationship between soy intake and the risk of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Further research needs to be done to determine the exact reason for why soy intake is beneficial for lung disease, but these early findings suggest that smokers should consume soy products. (7)

How is soy healthy for your mind?

Eating soyfoods may be beneficial for memory and cognitive function. Recent studies have found that soy may enhance short term memory due to the isoflavones. Further research needs to be done in order to fully understand this relationship. (8)

Why is soy beneficial during pregnancy?

Soy is a complete protein with all 9 essential amino acids, making it incredibly beneficial during pregnancy because protein is the building block of tissues, organs, and cells. In addition soyfoods maintain low cholesterol, manage weight gain, and prevent diabetes. (9)

What is satiety and how does this contribute to weight loss?

Satiety is the feeling of fullness, which can help facilitate appetite control. The sooner that a person feels satiated, the lower the total calorie intake. Soy protein plays an important role in satiety because protein has been found to help slow down the absorption of food in the body, resulting in less between-meal snacking, greater portion control and overall healthful weight management. (10)

About SunOpta:

SunOpta Grains and Foods Group has been providing the marketplace with healthful and functional foods for over 30 years and is a leading producer of soy, corn, sunflower and grain-based food ingredients. Offering Organic, Non-GMO and Identity Preserved products with a vertically integrated structure and controlling every step of the process, SunOpta’s mission is to always deliver high quality, healthy and wholesome products.

References

- (1) Soy for Health Benefits. United Soybean Board. http://www.soyconnection.com/health_nutrition/heart_health/7001_USB_HlthBroch_v2r3.pdf.
- (2) Frequently Asked Questions. Soyfoods Association of North America, May 2008. <http://www.soyfoods.org/health/faq#answer-3>.
- (3) Patterson, Anne. Isoflavones: New Frontier in Nutrition. U.S. Soyfoods Directory. <http://www.soyfoods.com/nutrition/isoflavone.html>.
- (4) Fish and Omega-3 Fatty Acids. American Heart Association. <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4632>.
- (5) Tallmadge, Katherine. Understanding Omega-3s. The Washington Post. March 2004. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A17258-2004Mar23.html>.
- (6) Messina, Mark. Soy & Women’s Health. Soy Connection. United Soybean Board. http://www.soyconnection.com/health_nutrition/pdf/Soy_for_Womens_Health.pdf.
- (7) Soyfoods Intake Cuts Smokers’ Risk of Developing COPD: Australian Study. SoyaTech. June 2009. http://www.soyatech.com/news_story.php?id=14469.
- (8) Healthy Truth About Soy. Soyfoods Association of North America, July 2009. <http://www.soyfoods.org/health/soy-for-healthy-living/healthy-truth-about-soy>.
- (9) Soy and Pregnancy. Soyfoods Association of North America. <http://www.soyfoods.org/health/soy-for-healthy-living/soy-and-pregnancy>.
- (10) Soy and Satiety. Soyfoods Association of North America. <http://www.soyfoods.org/health/soy-for-healthy-weight/soy-and-satiety>.

