

## The Truth and Hype Around Soy

Processed, packaged foods made of long lists of barely-pronounceable, disease-promoting chemicals and compounds line grocery store shelves all across the world, yet somehow soy - a plant from the earth - has been labelled as evil in certain circles.

In this article, you'll explore the truth and the hype around soy, and you can decide for yourself if you think it's really as dangerous as mainstream nutrition would have you think.

### Why are people scared of soy?

There are a lot of valid reasons for people to potentially be concerned about soy, but many of them are unfounded. Let's take a look at some of the main rumors:

#### 1. Soy causes (or contributes to) breast cancer

In a study conducted by the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, 140 women who had been recently diagnosed with invasive breast cancer were given either a soy supplement or a placebo and monitored carefully. The soy supplement was equal to around four cups of soy milk, or four servings of tofu, and the hypothesis was that soy foods, for a limited period of time, could influence the behavior around already-established breast cancer.

Although the test subjects who were taking the high levels of soy did show altered hormones, they did not show any difference in the actual progression of their tumors. Researchers concluded that for women with breast cancer, or who were recovering from breast cancer, soy in limited amounts appeared to be perfectly safe, and admitted that it also had protective effects to consider. (1)

Truth is, although soy does have phytoestrogens (plant-based forms of estrogen) so do many other plants like whole grains, dried beans, peas, fruits and broccoli. The case for the link between phytoestrogens and breast cancer can be misleading, and experts across the board agree that moderation is key, and variety in your diet is beneficial regardless of your health goals. (2)

#### 2. All Soy is GMO

Soy is the second largest genetically-modified crop in the USA following corn, and preceding cotton. This once staple food in Asian countries reputed to inhibit aging and enhance longevity and beautiful skin has now become a popular agricultural win, food additive and health concern. (3)

What you need to remember is that even though the soy industry is booming, and soy as an additive can definitely have negative effects, there are still plenty of GMO free options which are not just better, but a vital choice. By finding a high quality, organic tofu, tempeh, or even soy milk, you are skipping a lot of the dangers that come with eating anything GMO, and still enjoying the benefits of this plant-based power food.

### 3. Soy causes “man boobs”

Yep, that’s right. If you haven’t heard it yet, now you have: many men are afraid to eat soy because they’ve been told it can increase their bra size. And while high doses of phytoestrogens have been shown to affect hormones in rats, it’s important to recognize that rodents actually metabolize soy differently than humans, effectively making the studies inapplicable.

The research has ultimately shown that the men who’ve reportedly experienced changes in sex hormones were all consuming extremely high doses of soy, and the effects were reversed when their soy intake was reduced or discontinued. (4)

Does soy seem so dangerous anymore? Like all foods, variety is necessary. Many people, when first transitioning to a plant-based diet, go overboard on soy as a way of reaching higher protein levels. Plus, so many “fake meats” are loaded with soy protein. But let’s be honest: you don’t need to have soy milk for breakfast, tempeh for lunch, and tofu for dinner. And if you’re eating high quality whole foods, then occasional fake meats shouldn’t be a concern for you anyway.

Search out organic soy companies with high standards. Eat soy in its natural form as a lightly salted edamame bean or edamame burgers. Eat soy with lots of fresh vegetables, and other whole foods. That way you can concern yourself with all the other processed foods that are much worse for your health, and not be too worried about eating a Sunday Brunch tofu scramble (preferably with a mimosa!). (5)

- 1) <http://www.prevention.com/health/health-concerns/soy-foods-and-breast-cancer-risk>
- 2) <http://www.breastcancerfund.org/clear-science/radiation-chemicals-and-breast-cancer/phytoestrogens.html>
- 3) <http://time.com/3840073/gmo-food-charts/>
- 4) <http://veganenthusiasts.com/2016/07/16/the-soy-truth-every-vegan-wants-to-know-6-myths-debunked/>
- 5) <https://gmo-awareness.com/shopping-list/gmo-free-brands/>