

NUTRITION NUGGET # 8

Is eating too much soy harmful?



Answer: Eating large amounts of soy products may be harmful to our health, according to some studies.

Facts:

- Recent animal studies suggest that eating large amounts of estrogenic compounds might reduce fertility in women, trigger premature puberty, disrupt the development of fetuses and children.
- Individuals with a risk of hormone-dependent cancers (ovarian and uterine cancer), allergic or sensitive to soy, and those with thyroid problems should avoid eating too much soy.
- Eating more than 100 milligrams of isoflavones a day or more than 2 servings of foods with soy a day, would be too much soy according to a researcher at Tufts' Medical School.
- Soy, specifically its isoflavones or plant estrogen, is linked to health benefits including: lowering cholesterol and a decreased risk of breast cancer, and reduced risk of heart disease.
- Soy is a complete protein with all of the essential amino acids a person needs. Soy is a great vegetarian source of protein.
- In 1999, the FDA approved the food industry to place health claims on products with at least 6.25 g of soy protein, stating that soy proteins may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Apply: A vegan participant says she is concerned about not getting enough protein and fears soy may harm her health. What do you advise her?

References: Tufts E-News: How Much Soy is Too Much? <http://enews.tufts.edu/stories/1386/2001/02/19/SoyDangers>; Sacks FM, Lichtenstein A; Horn LV, Harris W, Kris-Etherton P, Winston M. Soy Protein, Isoflavones, and Cardiovascular Health, An American Heart Association Science Advisory for Professionals from the Nutrition Committee. *Circulation, Journal of the American Heart Association.* 112 (7):1034-1043; Dugdale DC. Soy: MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/007204.htm>; National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. Soy [NCCAM Herbs at a Glance]. <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/soy/ataglance.htm#cautions>; National Soybean Research Laboratory. National Soybean Research Laboratory Soy Benefits. http://www.nsrl.uiuc.edu/soy_benefits.html; How Much is Too Much Soy?, <http://www.utne.com/2007-07-01/Environment/How-Much-Is-Too-Much.aspx?page=2#ixzz1HGcPqSqS>. Image: http://www.istockphoto.com/file_closeup.php?id=4950755