



SOY GOOD AND BAD

With the ever increasing concern with health and nutrition, people are constantly looking for healthier options, and soy, is fast becoming a ubiquitous food product. Soy or the soya-bean is a type of legume, similar to peanuts and other types of beans. Soy is one of the most common plants farmed in the U.S. Many products are made from soy, including soy-sauce, edemame, flours, soy-milk, and tofu to name a few.

Soy is highly regarded for its protein content. Over the course of the day, our bodies need 20 distinct Amino Acids to build muscle, bone, and maintain other body functions, 9 of which are essential and our bodies cannot make on their own. All animal products, from milk, to cheese, to meat, and fish contain all 20 distinct amino acids, and especially the essential amino acids in a formulation that is balanced for our bodies. To obtain all these amino acids from plant products, it is necessary to combine different types of foods together, such as rice and beans.

The unique quality about soy however, is that it is a complete protein, similar to meat and animal products. Therefore, it does not need to be combined with other plant products to fully meet our needs. This is why soy is a wonderful meat replacement for vegetarians, vegans, or anyone else who might be steered away from eating animal products.

Additionally, soy is an excellent source of phytochemicals, antioxidants, and other healthy oils and nutrients; nutrients which help the body lower bad cholesterol levels, maintain optimal health, and fight-off disease, as well as reduce inflammation.

In essence, soy can be seen as a wonder-food.

However, there is also controversy with soy products, as with nearly any food product these days. One such controversy stems from soy's high concentration of phytoestrogen, a molecule which is molecularly similar to the body's own estrogen. High estrogen levels are linked with breast cancer, and it is still unknown if plant-sources of estrogen may be linked with increased cancer risk, or if they in fact reduce risk. Additionally, soy may be a highly allergenic food, causing stomach and other gastrointestinal discomfort or problems.

Therefore, while I strongly encourage people to add soy-products to their diet, from soy-beans, to tofu, to soy-milk, it is also prudent to exercise caution when eating such products and enjoy them in moderation: Up to one serving per day should provide the nutritional benefits of this power-house food without worry of the possible negative side-effects that may be associated with its consumption.