



# THE SOY CONTROVERSY

By Tricia Talerico, D.C., M.S., Nutr.

Soybeans are a type of legume native to Asia and have been part of traditional Asian diets for thousands of years. Today, soy is widely consumed, as a plant-based protein but also as an ingredient in many processed foods. Many vegetarians and vegans rely on soy as a main protein source. Like corn and wheat/gluten, soy is abundantly present in the American diet. You can find it in milk substitutes, dressings, sauces, chocolate, personal care products, cakes, crackers, and even infant formula. Soybeans are also used as animal feed, so it is present in your meat products if you are not buying grass-fed or pasture-raised. Let's look at some of the evidence for and against eating soy.

Soybeans can be eaten in their whole form or processed into many different forms. Whole soy products are the **least** processed and include soybeans and edamame. Soy milk and tofu are also made from whole soybeans. Like any food product, it is wise to always pick the least processed form. Soy foods can be a good source of protein and important nutrients, especially for vegetarians and vegans. **The potential benefits of soy products?**

1. May help lower cholesterol, especially LDL-C or bad cholesterol. It may also have a positive effect on HDL-C or good cholesterol. In part, this may be due to the abundant fiber in soy.

2. There is conflicting evidence for the benefit of soy intake and fertility.

3. May help reduce menopausal symptoms. Isoflavones are a class of phytoestrogens found naturally in soy that act like a weak estrogen in the female body. Since estrogen levels dramatically decrease during menopause and can lead to symptoms like hot flashes and night sweats, soy may help to reduce these symptoms.

4. May have a potentially beneficial effect on breast cancer. Studies show that high consumption of soy may be linked to a 30% lower risk of developing breast cancer in Asian women.

**What are the potential negative effects of soy on our health?**

1. Over 90% of U.S. soybeans are GMO. GMO or genetically modified organisms are created by combining different species of DNA. It may not be wise to give infants a soy-based formula as they are rapidly developing.

2. Soy can cross-react with Gluten as it resembles gluten on a molecular level. So, if you have a gluten sensitivity, your body cannot distinguish between gluten and soy and the immune response/inflammation can be the same.

3. Soy is goitrogenic as it contains goitrogens, substances that may negatively affect the thyroid by blocking iodine absorption. So, if you have hypothyroidism, you may avoid soy or at least make sure your iodine intake is sufficient.

**So, what to do about the consumption of soy?**

Many studies suggest that the potential health benefits of soy may depend on the form in which it is consumed. So, buy 100% organic soy, eat soy in its whole, unprocessed form, ie. Edamame, and read package labels carefully.

## IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH... IMPROVE YOUR LIFE!



**Tricia Talerico, D.C., M.S., Nutr.**  
**Nutrition and Weight Loss Center of Ocean**  
 Dow Plaza • 1819 Highway 35 North  
 Oakhurst, NJ 07755

**732-609-3366**

[www.nutritionandweightlosscenter.com](http://www.nutritionandweightlosscenter.com)  
[www.facebook.com/nutritionandweightlosscenterofocan](https://www.facebook.com/nutritionandweightlosscenterofocan)  
[www.instagram.com/nutritionandweightlosscenter](https://www.instagram.com/nutritionandweightlosscenter)

