



# Family Wellness First: Nutrition

January 2015 • [pathwaystofamilywellness.org](http://pathwaystofamilywellness.org)

## Soy—Oh, Boy!

### Things to Consider About This Not-Always-Healthy “Health” Food

*Frightening Fact: 93% of soy is genetically modified and more than 60% of processed foods contain soy under various names including: hydrogenated oils, lecithin, emulsifiers, tocopherol and proteins.*

People frequently ask me about soy expecting that I will respond with a simple "it's good" or "it's bad" for you. Instead I reply with a sigh, and then say "soy—oh, boy!" Because the answer is a little more complicated than it's "good" or "bad" for you. To simplify and separate fact from fiction, following are some things to consider about soy.

#### Things to Consider About Soy

1. Soy is one of the top five most common food allergens because it contains a protein enzyme inhibitor, trypsin, that prevents it and other nutrients from being properly digested. People with compromised digestive and immune function are especially susceptible. Symptoms range from digestive disturbances such as gas and bloating to severe depression and anxiety—and every other conceivable symptom that may be associated with food allergies or sensitivities.
2. 93% of America's soybean crop is genetically engineered (GE or GMO) and contains 27% more trypsin inhibitor, meaning that it has even greater potential for setting off allergic reactions and digestive disturbances. In 1998 the UK reported a 50% increase in food allergies and attributed this dramatic rise to the fact that consumers the previous year had started eating large amounts of imported GE soybeans. (See previous article for more on GMO's.)
3. Soy is best consumed in a fermented form such as miso, tempeh, natto and soy or tamari sauce. Fermentation reduces soybean's enzyme inhibitors to some degree, and is therefore much easier to digest and less likely to cause reactions. There are also fermented soy protein powders now available at health food stores. Sprouted soy and edamame (green soybeans) are also easier to digest and assimilate and a much better choice. Tofu, which is known to block mineral absorption, is best eaten warm with a little fish or other animal protein to offset this effect and increase digestibility.
4. Products such as soy flour, soy powders other than the fermented or sprouted variety, soy grits, flakes, nuts, and soy nut butter are best avoided because they haven't had the trypsin inhibitor removed and are therefore highly allergenic. Super-refined soy products, such as soybean oil, textured soy protein (TSP), and textured vegetable protein (TVP) are also not recommended as the soy is subjected to high pressure, high temperatures or caustic chemicals as part of the processing. Soy cheeses and soy milks are often highly refined and best avoided as well. Milks made from oats, rice, almonds and coconut are a better choice.
5. Asian women have very low rates of menopausal complaints, heart disease, breast cancer and osteoporosis. The soy industry, with sketchy evidence to support their claims, attributes this to soy being a regular part of the Asian diet. These claims, which have become widely accepted due to massive media campaigns, disregard extensive research that shows otherwise. They also disregard other dietary and lifestyle factors at play in Asian cultures.



For example, there are many Asian populations that don't eat soy as a regular part of their diet, yet still enjoy low rates of the chronic diseases mentioned. Among those who do eat soy regularly, fermented soy products are what is consumed the most. Asians aren't downing quarts of overly-sweetened, highly-processed soy milk or popping supplements containing concentrated soy isoflavones, which has become popular in the U.S.

## Establishing and Advancing the Chiropractic Family Wellness Lifestyle

In addition, the traditional Asian diet consists of primarily whole, fresh, natural foods including sea vegetables, which are packed with vital nutrients and one of the richest sources of absorbable calcium. They also eat a lot of fish, small amounts of meat, and little to no dairy products or processed foods—in stark contrast to the Standard American Diet, which consists of mostly processed foods high in sugar, fat, sodium, and excessive amounts of meat and zero sea vegetables.

6. Soy reduces thyroid hormone slowing metabolism and isn't appropriate fare for those who hypothyroid or wanting to lose weight. Sea vegetables on the other hand stimulate the thyroid and are frequently combined with soy in Asian cuisine such as miso soup, which results in the two counterbalancing one another.
7. As with any of the most common food allergens (wheat, dairy, soy, corn, etc.), if you choose to include soy in your diet, do so on a rotational basis eating it about once every 4-5 days (never daily!) in the more user-friendly forms described above. This will allow the body adequate processing time and reduce the likelihood of developing or exacerbating sensitivities and other problems.

Much of the hype about the benefits of soy isn't based on good science, but rather the interests of a booming industry that's making a gold mine on a cheap, versatile, highly-profitable commodity. Don't fall prey to these antics. As with any common food allergens, if you include soy in your diet be sure it agrees with your body and you're eating the most bioavailable and non-GMO forms.

**Resources:** For more information on this topic, read: *The Whole Soy Story*, by Kaayla T. Daniel.



**Kelly Hayford, C.N.C.** is the award-winning author of *If It's Not Food Don't Eat It!* As a former chiropractic assistant and junk-food junkie turned nutrition and health coach, Kelly has helped thousands restore their health, energy and natural weight.

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