



## The Association of Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgeons

...dedicated to safe, state-of-the-art surgery and health life-styles for women of all ages

### The Big Soy Debate

**Taking care of yourself means taking excellent care of your heart. We can help you make those important, everyday choices that mean so much to your heart's health -- and you'll lose weight to boot! Get started today.**

There's good news and bad news on the soybean front. Soy is good for you, but it's not a miracle food.

Don't be confused about the news that the American Heart Association "casts doubt" on the health claim about soy. Although the news is somewhat negative for claims that soy lowers risk for heart disease, the soybean's nutritional values haven't changed. Sometimes it's not what you're eating, but what you're NOT eating that could improve your diet.

A new scientific paper published in the American Heart Association's journal *Circulation* announced the findings of a panel of experts who determined there was little evidence that diets rich in isoflavones and soy protein conclusively improves cardiac risk factors, such as lowering "bad" LDL cholesterol. The group's review further suggests soy supplementation does not relieve menopausal symptoms, reduce cancer risk or protect against osteoporosis. The panel also recommended not using isoflavone supplements in food or pills.

The publication of these recommendations may mean that the Food & Drug Administration may reconsider the health claim that was approved in 1999, which says that a diet low in saturated fat -- and that includes at least 25 grams of soy protein daily -- can cut the risk for heart disease, but don't give up soy foods. They're beneficial to cardiovascular and overall health because of their high content of polyunsaturated fats, fiber, vitamins and minerals and low content of saturated fat. As part of an overall healthy eating plan, soy foods are great.

#### Soy Sense

Soy foods have always been considered good for you. And like all plant foods, they are low in saturated fat and contain no cholesterol.

Dr. David L. Katz, director of the Prevention Research Center at Yale University School of Medicine and author of the recently released *The Flavor Point Diet*, says, "These disappointing conclusions are not quite the whole story. For one thing, absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence. If the benefits of soy supplements are real but small, it might require larger studies than have been done to reveal them.

"Second, some women do report relief of menopausal symptoms with soy supplements. So what to do? If you are taking soy supplements to protect your bones or treat high cholesterol, you may well be wasting your money, and should probably seek more reliable strategies. If you are taking supplements for menopause symptoms and feeling better, then keep at it. If not feeling better, the AHA results suggest you are in a big club, and that you should give up the practice and move on.

"If you are making soy a regular part of your diet because you are health conscious, by all means continue. Whether you are benefiting from what soy adds, what it is replacing, or both, you are likely benefiting. And nothing in the AHA report suggests otherwise."

Bottom line: If you decide to eliminate all animal products or just replace meat, soybeans are a good source of protein.

What you should know about protein:

- Animal protein is not necessary to get all the protein you need. Most all foods contain varying amounts of protein.

Even most fruits provide a gram or so of protein per serving.

- Most adults require about 0.8 to 1.0 gram of protein per kilogram of body weight, and for most children, adolescents and athletes 1.2 grams per kilogram would suffice.
- It's very difficult in this country to be protein-deficient. Most people get far more than they need. The recommended daily amount (RDA) of protein is between 12 percent and 15 percent of total daily calorie intake. However, the average protein intake for adults in the U.S. is between 15 percent and 20 percent of energy intake.

Protein is important for:

- Cellular growth; maintenance and repair of muscles and bones
- Energy (along with carbohydrates and fats)
- A constituent of many metabolic processes in the body. Our body contains about 50,000 different proteins made from about 22 different amino acids. We can synthesize 14 of these 22 amino acids (nonessential amino acids) and eight essential amino acids must come from food.

Plant Protein:

- Foods such as textured vegetable protein (TVP), tofu, seitan (wheat gluten) are concentrated sources of protein. Legumes (12 to 15 grams of protein per cup), nuts and seeds (about 11 grams in just a third-cup) and cooked grains like quinoa, wheat berries and amaranth (approximately 11 to 15 grams per 1/2 cup) are rich in protein.

The 1988 position paper of the American Dietetic Association tells us that "food combining" is not necessary. By eating a diet of a variety of fruits, vegetables and unrefined grains, seeds, legumes and nuts we create a "pool" of amino acids that circulate in our blood stream, and are available to the body as necessary.

Jeffrey Novak, a registered dietitian and director of nutrition at the Pritikin Longevity Center & Spa in Adventura, Florida, points us to an informative article in the *Pritikin ePerspective*, their online newsletter, which reminds us that all beans contain a lot of great nutrition, are rich in fiber and phytonutrients. Pinto beans, black beans, lentils, red beans are lower in fat (only 3 percent to 9 percent) compared to soybeans (about 37 percent fat) -- important for those watching their weight.

All beans contain isoflavones and are rich in fiber, protein and a variety of vitamins and nutrients. Choose lower-fat versions of soy foods, such as low-fat soymilk and soy yogurt and 1-percent-fat tofu, especially when you're trying to lose weight. Instead of eating concentrated soy protein and isoflavone supplements, Jeff likes his clients to enjoy soy foods. "I'd much rather see people eating real food. With food, you'll get plenty of isoflavones and other nutrients -- but not too much."

Tofu is made from cooked puréed soybeans processed into a custard-like cake. It has a neutral flavor and can be stir-fried, mixed into "smoothies," or blended into a cream-cheese texture for use in dips or as a cheese substitute. It comes in firm, soft and silken textures. Choose low-fat tofu if watching calories.

Soy milk can be consumed as a beverage or used in recipes as a substitute for cow's milk. Sometimes fortified with calcium, it comes plain or in flavors such as vanilla, chocolate and coffee. For lactose-intolerant individuals, it can be a good replacement for dairy products. Choose low-fat or nonfat soy milk for lower calories. Remember that flavored soy milks usually have added sugar.

Soy flour is created by grinding roasted soybeans into a fine powder and adds protein to baked goods, and because it adds moisture it can be used as an egg substitute in these products.

Textured soy protein (TVP) is made from defatted soy flour, compressed and dehydrated. It can be used as a meat substitute or as filler in dishes such as meatloaf.

Tempeh is made from whole, cooked soybeans formed into a chewy cake and used as a meat substitute (Great on the

grill or as "kabobs").

Miso is a fermented soybean paste used for seasoning and in soup stock.

Soy protein also is found in many "meat analog" products, such as soy sausages, burgers, franks and cold cuts, as well as soy yogurts and cheese, all of which are intended as substitutes for their animal-based counterparts.

eDiets has a flavorful variety of recipes incorporating different soy foods. Grilled tempeh, stir-fried tofu dishes and casseroles; soy shakes and dips are just a sampling of the delicious recipes included (or optional) for most of our eDiets meal plans.