

Getting the Best from Soy

Trusted as a dietary staple in Asia for centuries, the soybean is a unique natural source of beneficial nutrition. In fact, soy is the only commonly consumed plant-based protein that is nutritionally complete, containing all of the essential amino acids required for optimum health.

In addition to complete protein, soybeans also provide fiber, iron and naturally occurring ALA omega-3 fatty acids. They are low in saturated fat and, like all plant foods, cholesterol-free.

Soy can play an important role in a plant-based diet, an approach to everyday nutrition that is increasingly recommended by healthcare experts.^{1,2} A high consumption of plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and legumes (including soybeans) is associated with lower rates of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.³ Numerous studies also suggest that vegetarians — those who consume mostly plant-based foods — have lower LDL-cholesterol levels, lower blood pressure and lower rates of hypertension than non-vegetarians.⁴

In order to reap maximum benefit from soy in your diet, look for minimally processed soyfoods that preserve as much of the soy plant's inherent nutrition as possible. Tofu, tempeh, edamame (whole soybeans) and soymilk made from whole soybeans are all good choices and are readily available in most supermarkets.

What About Supplements?

Although soy supplements may offer specific support for particular conditions,⁵ it is important to note that for overall nutrition, soy supplements and foods made from isolated soy protein may not offer the same well-rounded balance of nutrients as foods made from whole soy.

See How Soyfoods Stack Up:

	CALORIES	PROTEIN (G)	SATURATED FAT (G)	CHOLESTEROL (MG)
Tofu (3-oz svg)	120	13	1	0
85% Lean Ground Beef (3-oz svg)	210	24	5	75

	CALCIUM	CALORIES	CHOLESTEROL	SATURATED FAT	SUGARS	ALA OMEGA-3
Plain Soymilk (8-oz svg)	30% DV	100	0 mg	0.5 g	6 g	300 mg
2% Dairy Milk (8-oz svg)	30% DV	120	20 mg	3 g	12 g	20 mg

Source: USDA Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 22, 2009.

1 Position of the American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian diets. J Am Diet Assoc 2009; 109: 1266-1282.

2 Report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee on the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010.

3 Hu FB. AJCN 2003; 78 (supp): 544S-51S.

4 Lichtenstein AH et al. Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations Revision 2006: A scientific statement from the American Heart Association. Circulation 2006; 114: 82-96.

5 Nahas EA et al. Efficacy and safety of a soy isoflavone extract in postmenopausal women: a randomized, double-blind, and placebo-controlled study. Maturitas 2007; Nov 20; 58(3):249-58.

