

Soy. Is. Not. Health. Food.

Say it with me – everyone – let me hear it: Soy! Is! Not! Health! Food!

Longtime HSI members and e-Alert readers know the truth about soy. But that truth flies under the radar in our popular culture where soy is widely regarded as wholesome and nutritious.

In fact, it's neither.

Soy I.Q.

According to a report from NutraIngredients-USA, soy ignorance is high.

A recent survey of more than 2,000 U.S. adults reaped these results:

- More than half say they know very little about soy
- Less than 20 percent say they consume soy products every week
- More than 30 percent say they consume soy products every month
- About one-third say they've never even tried a soy product
- Nearly 85 percent say they can name at least one nutritional benefit of soy

Don't know much about soy? No problem. You can visit the online Soy Museum www.thesoydaily.com where you'll learn, for instance, that Henry Ford was a pioneer in bringing soy to the West. You can even see a photo of Henry wearing a soy fiber suit.

As for the three stats on frequency of soy product consumption, they're all 100 percent wrong.

Maybe millions of consumers have never knowingly sought out a soy product, but I can guarantee they've consumed plenty of products that contain soy. Check a few food- packaging labels in your kitchen cabinet. You'll find soybean oil, soy lecithin, soy flour, and soy protein isolate hidden in all kinds of processed foods – bread, candy, cereal, cookies, crackers, sausage, canned foods, etc.

And those folks who say they can name at least one nutritional benefit of soy – I'll bet 90 percent of them mention protein. This has been soy's big selling point for decades: protein without meat. And that's one of the key reasons it's been confused with health food – because many vegetarians rely on soy for protein intake.

Ironically, these health conscious vegetarians who knock back loads of unfermented soy products are probably doing their health more harm than good.

The joy of fermentation

In previous e-Alerts, HSI Panelist Allan Spreen, M.D., has noted that the phytates in soy actually impede absorption of protein and four key minerals: calcium,

magnesium, iron, and zinc. But the phytates are deactivated when soy is fermented.

Dr. Spreen: "Tempeh, miso, soy sauce made by the traditional method (most in the U.S. is not), and a few other forms are the only ones that qualify, and we don't see them much around here."

Several years ago, Dr. Spreen gave me a quick education about the truth of soy when he sent me a copy of a groundbreaking article titled "The Ploy of Soy" by Sally Fallon and Mary G Enig, Ph.D., of the Weston A. Price Foundation (a pro-raw dairy group). In just a few paragraphs, Fallon and Enig put the nutritional realities of soy consumption into perspective – a perspective you won't find anywhere in the mainstream. Here are a few of the key points they make:

- Soybeans contain "antinutrients" that inhibit enzymes needed for protein digestion and amino acid uptake
- Soybeans contain hemagglutinin, a substance that promotes the clotting of red blood cells
- Soybean hemagglutinin and enzyme inhibitors are deactivated during the fermentation process
- Enzyme inhibitors are reduced in bean curd and tofu, but not completely eliminated
- When vegetarians substitute dairy products and meat with bean curd and tofu, they may risk mineral deficiencies
- Fermented soy products – such as miso and tempeh – provide nutrients that are easily absorbed

Soy intake may also increase kidney stone risk. A 2001 study published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, showed how soybeans, tofu, and commercially processed soy products – especially textured soy protein – contain extremely high levels of oxalate, a compound that binds with calcium in the kidneys, increasing the risk of kidney stone development.

It can't be said often enough: Soy is not health food.

For more eye opening details about soy, you can find "The Ploy of Soy" on the Weston A. Price web site: www.westonaprice.org .