

SOY FOODS FOR HEALTH

As more consumers are becoming interested in improving their health, soy foods have become increasingly popular in Canada, United States and the rest of the world.

Not many years ago, soy foods were primarily the domain of vegetarians, and many people thought of soy foods as traditional Asian foods such as tofu, tempeh and miso.

Now, a greater variety of soy foods are available, such as soy beverages, yogurts, soy cheese, breads, breakfast cereals and meat alternatives such as burger patties, soy sausages and sandwich slices.

The table below provides some great tasting foods to try:

Soy food	Serving Size	Soy Protein (g/serve)	Fat (g/serve)
Low fat soy beverage, soy protein based	250ml	8.8	3.8
Low fat soy beverage, wholebean	250ml	4.3	2
Low fat soy based frozen dessert	100ml	1.9	2.2
Flavoured soy beverage	300ml	9.3	4.5
Soy custard, vanilla	100g	3.2	1
Soy yogurt, regular	200g	5.4	2.6
Original Soy Burgers	60g	7.8	3.9
Tofu	100g	11.0	5
Bread containing soy	2 slices/80g	2.8	5.6
Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP)	½ cup/70g	12	0.1
Soybeans, cooked	½ cup/100g	9	5.5
Tempeh	½ cup/70g	10	7

Sources: Product package information

Soy foods vary in their protein content, so consumers should check nutrition panels on their favourite soy foods and beverages to ensure that they are getting the effective daily intake of soy protein for health benefits.

Soy foods or isoflavone supplements?

The number and range of soy foods and isoflavone supplements that are available is continually increasing. While isoflavone supplements offer a convenient way of increasing the isoflavone content of the diet, at this stage researchers recommend obtaining the benefits of soy and isoflavones from foods, rather than supplements.

This relates to the lack of effect observed on some markers of health when women have consumed only purified isoflavones. For example, purified isoflavones have not been found to lower elevated cholesterol levels (although other beneficial effects were observed on blood vessels)^{1, 2}. Foods and beverages made from soy beans and soy protein are recommended, as they provide a wider range of potentially beneficial nutrients and phytochemicals, in addition to soy protein and isoflavones³.

1. Nestel PJ, Yamashita T, Sasahara T, et al., Soy isoflavones improve systemic arterial compliance but not plasma lipids in menopausal and perimenopausal women, *Arterioscler Thromb Vasc Biol* 1997;17:3392-3398.
2. Simons LA, von Konigsmark M, Simons J, Celermajer DS, Phytoestrogens Do Not Influence Lipoprotein Levels or Endothelial Function in Healthy, Postmenopausal Women, *Am, J Cardiol* 2000;85:1297-1301.
3. NAMS Consensus Opinion, The role of isoflavones in menopausal health: consensus opinion of The North American Menopause Society, *Menopause* 2000;7:215-229.