

Soya

Once touted as the ultimate health food, soya is now coming under intense scrutiny for its purported health benefits. In fact, recent research suggests that soya consumption could be detrimental to our health, owing to the anti-nutrients it contains. These anti-nutrients interfere with vitamin and mineral absorption, thereby reducing the amount of nutrients available for assimilation into our bodies. Soya foods deprive us of nutrients essential for optimum health and well-being.

Previous studies on animals and humans have linked the consumption of soya and isoflavones-rich soya protein with reduced body weight.

These studies did not investigate the individual effects of the pure soya protein and soya isoflavones. Maybe only the higher intake of soya proteins may explain the observed effects.

This German study investigated the possible effect of soya isoflavones as appetite suppressant and on body weight. It is known that estrogen (estradiol) and similar components interact with so called satiety hormones, such as peptide YY and ghrelin. The researchers theorized that the intake of soya isoflavones, which have a similar structure than estradiol, may also have this effect.

Studies with ovariectomized rats have shown that low estrogen levels increase body weight, an effect that is reversed with oral intake of genistein. Treatment of hysterectomized postmenopausal women with estrogens increased the levels of ghrelin. Peptide YY is a short protein that appears to reduce appetite and is released by cells in the ileum and colon in response to feeding, whereas ghrelin is a hormone produced mainly by cells in of the stomach cells and pancreas that stimulates appetite.

The researchers tested the effect of dietary isoflavones (50 mg

isoflavones/day) on 34 healthy postmenopausal women in a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, cross-over trial with a washout period of eight weeks. The isoflavones intake corresponds to the upper range of a traditional Asian diet. About half the women were classified as equol producers. Equol is an isoflavandiol metabolized from isoflavones by bacterial flora. Only about 30-50% of people have intestinal bacteria that make equol (=equol producer).

They found that the intake of isoflavones had no significant effect on body weight but significantly increased peptide YY and independent of equol production. Ghrelin production was not influenced by isoflavones treatment but its production was significantly lower in equol producers than in equol non-producers. The duration of this study may have been too short to detect an influence on body weight.

The study concluded that isoflavones had an effect on peptide YY production but that this effect did not translate in reduced energy intake or reduced bodyweight. It showed that peptide YY has no major role in the regulation of body weight. A larger and more rigorous study should be conducted to detect a possible effect of soy isoflavones on body weight.

For those who consume soya drinks, remember that soya protein isolate has vastly inferior absorption and bioavailability rates, compared to whey and casein protein. Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible to avoid soya as it is added to a vast array of foods in addition to being consumed on its own.

Soya products include soya milk, soy ice cream, soya pasta, textured vegetable protein ('mock-meat'), tofu and fermented soya products such as miso and tempeh.

Soya foods are usually highly processed despite being marketed as a natural, high-protein, plant-based alternative to animal protein.

However, soya foods also contain high levels of plant estrogen, called isoflavones, with similar effects to the female hormone estrogen. This is particularly detrimental to the health of males as it lowers their level of testosterone, resulting in a feminizing effect on masculine features, as well as lower sperm counts and decreased sex drives.

The consumption of soya products has also been linked to cases of hyperthyroidism, a condition where the thyroid glands overproduce hormones which are then secreted into the bloodstream at unhealthy levels, causing a host of problems such as fatigue, insomnia, appetite loss and reproductive problems.

Despite being hailed as a female-friendly miracle food due to its ability to mimic the effects of estrogen, soya has also been linked to depression and menstrual irregularities in women.

While it is a well-documented fact that soya interferes with the sexual development of male infants, its effects on female babies have been kept hidden from most people, under the impression that it is greatly beneficial to females of all ages. The ugly truth is that increased rates of precocious puberty in girls have also been linked to copious soya consumption.

Limit your consumption of soya to fermented soya products as the fermentation process destroys the anti-nutrients found in them.