

“There’s no business like soy business”

Is soy good for you or are we being fooled yet again by big industry. It is a sad fact that there is much wrong with the soy bean and it is doing untold damage to millions *and it is very big business.*

There are at least 100 million acres of soy under cultivation in the United States alone, much of it genetically engineered. In Australia it is estimated that about 50,000 acres are cultivated. Initially planted for the oil which became a very large industry, they had a lot of soy protein residue left over, and since they couldn’t feed it to animals, except in very small amounts, another market was needed. Promoting something as a health food has proven over time to be an extremely effective and lucrative strategy eg margarine instead of natural butter, rancid polyunsaturated vegetable oils instead of nourishing saturated fats and so there is now a thriving soy industry: we have soy cheese, soy burgers, soy yogurt, soy milk, the list goes on, it’s in bread, cakes, confectionery, breakfast cereals, sauces, snackfoods, pasta, it is even in non-stick cooking sprays, it is widely used in stockfeeds and pet foods and worst of all infant formulas.

What’s wrong with soy? Babies fed soy-based formula have 13,000 to 22,000 times more oestrogen compounds in their blood than babies fed milk-based formula. Infants fed exclusively on soy formula have the oestrogenic equivalent of five birth control pills a day! Male babies undergo a ‘testosterone surge’ during the first few months of life when levels may be as high as those of an adult male. Soy infant feeding floods the bloodstream with female hormones that inhibit testosterone– could this be linked to disrupted development pattern in boys, learning difficulties, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders. Soy also lacks cholesterol, essential for the development of the brain and nervous system. Soy consumption lowers testosterone levels in men. Tofu was consumed by Buddhist monks to reduce libido.

Phytoestrogens are powerful endocrine disrupters. Intake of phytoestrogens even at moderate levels during pregnancy can have adverse effects on the developing foetus and the timing of puberty later in life (testosterone surges also occur during gestation). Consuming soy milk during pregnancy can lead to a failure to produce sufficient breast milk necessitating possibly a soy formula.

Soy phytoestrogens are potent anti-thyroid agents having clearly defined toxic effects on the thyroid gland such as hypothyroidism, thyroid cancer, and autoimmune thyroid diseases. Low thyroid function is associated with difficulties during menopause. As far back as the 1950’s phytoestrogens were being linked to increased cases of cancer, infertility, leukaemia and endocrine disruption, eg premature development of girls, infertility, disruption to the menstrual cycle.

You’ve got to marvel at an industry that can market soy isoflavones as a form of oestrogen replacement therapy (HRT) for menopausal women and also claim it is safe for babies!

What’s wrong with soy? The soy plant has a natural affinity for aluminium extracting it from the soil and concentrating it in the bean. Aluminium is toxic to the kidneys and the nervous system. Soy milk contains 100 times more aluminium than cow’s milk and like margarine soy milk is a man-made toxic construct. Many processes are involved – you can’t milk a bean! The beans are ground at high temperature, the remaining oils are extracted with dangerous solvents and the bean meal is mixed with an alkaline solution and sugars to remove fibre, an acid wash follows then a number of chemicals are added for colour, flavour, odour etc! And they call this a health food. There is one soy milk that is naturally fermented, bonsoy, still high in phytoestrogens so small amounts would be wise.

What’s wrong with soy? High levels of phytic acid in soy reduce assimilation of essential minerals; calcium, magnesium, copper, iron and zinc. And excessive consumption of soy can cause arrhythmias by disrupting potassium metabolism.

While Asians have used small amounts of painstakingly prepared soy (a long fermentation process of six months to three years!), the western world especially vegetarians and vegans are currently consuming vast amounts (not fermented) - more soy products and isoflavones than any culture in human history, as one researcher has put it 'entering a great unknown'.

Surely the safest way to eat soy, if you chose to, is the way it's been used by the Asians for around a thousand years: fermented; in moderation; as a condiment. And that's it.