

Once and For All, Is Soy Good or Bad For You?

By: Missy Wilkinson



There's a lot of misinformation circulating about soy products. Like, who started the rumor that tofu takes on the flavor of whatever sauce it's served with? IT DOESN'T. It just tastes like tofu.

Not that tofu is a bad taste. And in any case, flavor is really the least of your concerns when it comes to soy products. Heralded as an inexpensive, nutrient-dense, plant-based source of protein, only to be dismissed by the Paleo crowd, among others, as a cancer-causing, thyroid-wrecking, baby-killing malfeasance, soy remains one of the world's most controversial health foods. So should it be part of your diet? We wrangled doctors, dietitians, and a chef to find out.

No supplements, got it. So what type of soy products should I eat?

The experts interviewed for this article were unanimous in their belief that organic, unprocessed, or fermented soy products are most beneficial. They all said it's a bad idea to take soy protein and soy supplements.

"What you have to look out for is non-organic soy, which considering that 91% of soybeans are genetically engineered is hard to avoid," says Dr. Gabrielle Francis. "Only eat brands that list organic soybeans in the ingredients list. Avoid products with soy protein isolates as well."

"Look for organic tofu, natto, tempeh, and also edamame," adds chef Lauren Feingold. "In the end, it's about moderation and how unprocessed is the food."

Essentially, their soy advice is unsurprisingly similar to one of the most common refrains tossed around in dietary circles: nothing in excess, especially if it's highly processed. But if you're faced with a hot dog and a tofu dog at a barbecue, the choice is clear: Only one of those things is a carcinogen.