

Mark Messina, PhD, MS

The Role of SoyFoods in Healthy and Sustainable Diets

Dr. Messina is the co-owner of Nutrition Matters, Inc., a nutrition consulting company, an adjunct associate professor at Loma Linda University in California, and the Executive Director of the Soy Nutrition Institute. For the past 30 years, Dr. Messina has devoted his time to the study of the health effects of soyfoods and soybean isoflavones. He writes extensively on these subjects, having published more than 100 articles and book chapters for health professionals. Dr. Messina is the chairperson of the editorial advisory board and writes a regular column for *The Soy Connection*, a quarterly newsletter that reaches over 250,000 health professionals. Dr. Messina has organized 10 international conferences on soyfoods and has given over 650 presentations to health professionals and has presented in 54 countries. He is co-author of three books along with his wife, Virginia Messina, MPH, RD. Dr. Messina has been eating soyfoods since 1972 when his sister first cooked him tofu. He first became interested in soy because his martial arts instructor told him his skills would improve if he became a vegetarian.

Description:

Traditional Asian soyfoods have been consumed for centuries and the modern soyfoods based on soy protein ingredients have been consumed for five decades. Nevertheless, confusion surrounds the role of soy in healthy and sustainable diets. Recently, foods classified as ultra-processed have been associated with an assortment of adverse effects. Although this classification includes soymilk and soy-based meat analogs, evidence indicates these foods warrant inclusion in the diet. Much of the research focus on soyfoods over the past 30 years is because they are uniquely rich sources of isoflavones. Isoflavones have been posited to reduce risk of several chronic diseases including breast cancer, osteoporosis, and coronary heart disease and to alleviate menopausal symptoms. However, isoflavones are also frequently classified as endocrine disruptors and have been linked with impaired growth and development and increased cancer risk. This presentation will show that the clinical and observational data are supportive of the benefits and safety of soyfoods and that soybeans are an extremely energy efficient and environmentally friendly way to produce protein. Except for those allergic to soy protein, which is relatively rare, soyfoods should be viewed as healthy foods to add to the diet.

Objectives:

- 1) Identify the nutritional differences between traditional and modern soyfoods
- 2) Discuss the role of soy in chronic disease prevention
- 3) Refute concerns about harmful effects of soy
- 4) Make intake recommendations for people of all ages