



# Soy Alert?

There are a number of anti-soy articles being distributed over the Internet and through various publications. They are often found under such headlines as “Soy Alert,” “The Dark Side of Soy,” “The Dangers of Soy,” and so forth. While the themes in these articles are provocative, it is our view that they lack substantiation. Even if we give such articles the benefit of the doubt as well-intentioned, they are nonetheless examples of what one of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’s greatest thinkers, humanitarians, and Nobel Laureates, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, warned was mankind’s greatest danger—loss of rational thinking.<sup>1</sup>

Let’s be honest. Were soy the notorious poison that it is claimed to be in these articles, it surely would have been banned long ago...we would have observed soy consumers suffering highly disproportionate rates of cancer, dementia, physical deformities, myriad other diseases, and otherwise dropping dead from consuming soy.

One anti-soy article tells us about a flock of commercial birds, some of which died as a result of being fed soy, and asks, “If soy does this to birds, what is it doing to us?” The connection is erroneous and illogical, and it seems the bird keepers knew less than their flock. Birds do not seek out soy for food, and sound science knows that animal data does not automatically translate to humans. For example, Thalidomide, the drug that caused tragic birth defects in humans, did not cause birth defects in test animals; and as any dog lover knows, humans enjoy chocolate with no ill effects, but it can be lethal to canines.

Another article says, “Preliminary studies (these are not referenced or footnoted) indicate that children given soy formula go through puberty much earlier than children who were not fed soy products,” and that “...the trend toward lower male fertility may be due to environmental estrogens, including soy phytoestrogens (again, no references).” The medical literature provides no evidence of endocrine effects in humans from infant consumption of modern soy-based formulas. Growth is normal, and no changes in timing of puberty or in fertility rates have been reported in humans who consumed soy formula as infants.<sup>2</sup>

Many anti-soy articles cite a Hawaiian study purportedly showing that soy consumption caused accelerated brain aging and was associated with Alzheimer’s disease. The study, headed by Dr. Lon White, was an “observational” study. While these articles would have readers believe that soy causes Alzheimer’s and brain aging, this type of study merely suggests a link between a behavior (in this case tofu intake) and an outcome like brain aging. It does not prove that one thing caused the other. Dr. White, himself, added, “It is never proper to draw definitive conclusions from a single study. It would be premature to advise anyone that they should change their diets based on a single research study. In addition, there is evidence that consumption of soy foods may have beneficial effects related to improving blood lipid levels, and reducing risks for breast cancer.” Indeed. A recent study of patients with high cholesterol who were given soy protein showed significant reductions in LDL (bad) cholesterol, and that soy protein did not increase the risk of hormone-induced cancers.<sup>3</sup> Soybean compounds appear to also reduce the incidence of colon, prostate, and breast cancer.<sup>4</sup> Of course, if one is being treated for cancer, or has a family history of cancer, one should seek the advice of a physician concerning soy or any food additions or modifications to diet. It just makes sense.

The Internet is a rich source of unsupported, unreliable data and opinions. We encourage a skeptical approach to such information, and recommend a look at such reputable sites as The American Council for Science and Health ([www.acsh.org](http://www.acsh.org)), HealthCentral ([www.healthcentral.com](http://www.healthcentral.com)), or for the more technically adept, The National Library of Medicine ([www.nlm.nih.gov/hinfo.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hinfo.html)), to name a few. And for more on soy issues from Shaklee’s Health Sciences staff please visit the Reference Library and Hot Topics in the Member Center at [www.shaklee.net](http://www.shaklee.net).

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<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, Albert. *Out of My Life and Thought*, New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> *Nutrition Reviews* #56: Pg. 193-204, 1998; *Journal of Pediatrics* #124: Pg. 612-620, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> *Metabolism* #49: Pg. 537-543. 2000.

<sup>4</sup> *Journal Nutrition* #125: Pg. 733-743S, 1995.