

## Is eating soy safe?

As we all know in our media driven society, sound bites can lead to a headline which has very little proven scientific research behind it. The data can be confusing. Recently, there was a story on the internet stating soy was not safe and alleged it could increase your rate of cancer. The short answer is that this is not true.

Eating soy has many health benefits when taken in a reasonable amount which is defined by the FDA as 25 grams of soy protein a day. This translates into about 3 servings a day of a soy food; some examples being 1 cup of soy milk, 3-4 ounces of tofu, 1 cup of soy pasta or a ¼ cup of soy nuts or edamame (my personal favorite).

There is also no evidence that soy foods cause thyroid problems in people who eat a balanced diet to also include vegetarians with adequate iodine in their diet. Soy contains isoflavones which has a structural similarity to the human hormone estrogen. Claims have been made that the isoflavones in soy can be unsafe in women leading to increased breast cancer rates or leading to early puberty in infants fed soy formula due to its estrogen-like effect. Weak plant isoflavones have not been proven to have any measurable estrogen-like effect. Additionally, other properties in soy may have anticancer protection. The only possible exception and unclear effect is with women who are being treated for an existing breast cancer which is estrogen positive, a specific subgroup of breast cancer. Some cancer research groups have recommended limiting soy foods in estrogen dependent breast cancer patients. Otherwise, The National Cancer institute recommends a moderate amount of soy is safe in the diet of breast cancers survivors.