

National Cancer Institute study: Soyfoods may prevent breast cancer

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women (lung cancer is first). One in eight women will develop breast cancer at some point in her life.

To date it has been difficult to conclusively identify those lifestyle measures that can make a difference in the one in eight odds of getting breast cancer. Scientists are increasingly coming to believe that life events before the age of 20 can largely determine whether a woman will develop breast cancer as an adult.

New research from cancer experts at the National Cancer Institute, suggests that eating soyfoods as a child and teenager – specifically, before a girl enters puberty, may be a way to prevent breast cancer.

Dr. Mark Messina, PhD, Adjunct Professor in Nutrition at Loma Linda University, former National Cancer Institute researcher and expert on the role of soy in diets explains that, “In this study, Asian women in California who consumed higher amounts of soy between the ages of five and 11 were 58% less likely to develop breast cancer, as compared to women who consumed less soy during this period of their lives.”

“These exciting results,” Messina continues, “are similar to those from a Chinese study, which found that girls who had high soy intake between the ages of 13 and 15 were half as likely to develop breast cancer later in life. The amount of soy consumed as adults was not protective against breast cancer, although soyfoods’ overall benefits in reducing cholesterol and providing high quality protein are well proven.”

In the November, 2006 issue of Time magazine, Dr. Andrew Weil recommended that “women who have a family history of breast cancer ought to be introducing their kids to soyfoods as early as possible. Substituting soy milk for cow’s milk is one way to start. I believe,” Weil continues, “the same thing will be shown to hold true for boys: a similar diet may lower their future risk of prostate cancer.”

Two other human studies, one from Canada and another from California support the benefit of eating soyfoods during childhood and adolescence. In addition, animal studies suggest that the phytoestrogens in soybeans and soyfoods change the cells in the developing breast, permanently making them less likely to become cancer cells.

“These studies suggest that consuming modest amounts of soy – as little as one or two servings a day - is enough to provide this valuable benefit,” Messina concludes.

“Adding soyfoods to the diets of young and adolescent girls is really quite easy, thanks to the amazing array of soy-based foods,” reports Linda Funk, Executive Director of The Soyfoods Council. “Let your teenager make her own morning or afternoon smoothie with soy milk and fresh fruit such as a banana, berries or mango. Or use frozen fruit to make the smoothie icy and refreshing - try blueberries, peaches or other berries.”

Edamame, sweet green soybeans, so important as appetizers on Asian menus, is another great snack for girls and all other family members. Use edamame as a substitute for your favorite hummus recipe or add to your favorite salad. Or try roasted soynuts. Crunchy and satisfying, they come in an assortment of flavors. Serve them as a snack, toss into salads and baked goods or chop to top casseroles. Soynut butter offers soy benefits in place of peanut butter.

One to two servings of fortified soy milk daily helps provide the calcium necessary for growing bones, in addition to possible cancer prevention. Cubes of tofu are perfect finger food for toddlers – easy to handle and digest and mild in flavor and are an excellent source of protein. Soy yogurt is another easy and delicious way to get important nutrients and calcium into children’s diets.

Girls aren't the only ones who benefit from soyfoods. Messina emphasizes that soyfoods can make important contributions to a healthy diet for people of all ages (and genders).

For more information on soyfoods and nutrition, go to www.thesoyfoodscouncil.com.

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