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## What Exactly is in Soy Foods?

Foods made from soybeans, including tofu, tempeh, edamame, soy milk, and soy nuts, contain several important nutrients: protein (the only plant food that contains all 8 essential amino acids humans need for health), fiber, iron, calcium, zinc, and B vitamins. Soy foods are also important for what they don't contain: they don't have any cholesterol and they're low in saturated fat, two items that are known to increase the risk of heart disease. Soy foods are also the most widely-consumed foods that contain a type of healthy phytochemical called isoflavones.



## What Are Isoflavones?

Isoflavones are phytoestrogens, compounds from plants that have weak estrogenic activity in our body. Legumes, grains and vegetables all contain small amounts of isoflavones, with soybeans as the most concentrated source.

## Types of Isoflavones in Soy Foods

The three isoflavones genistein, daidzein, and glycitein and their respective glycosides account for approximately 50%, 40% and 10%, (respectively) of the total isoflavone content of soybeans. The research on isoflavones is currently yielding mixed results and because of this lack of consensus, there are no clear research-based recommendations at this time.

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## So, How Much Soy is Enough?

Moderate consumption of soy foods is 1-2 servings per day of whole soy foods, or 25-50 grams of soy isoflavones per day. The content of isoflavones in soy foods varies widely. For example, ½ cup of dry-roasted soybeans contains 41 milligrams of isoflavones, while ½ cup of edamame contains only 16 milligrams of isoflavones.

