

The Scientific Data Are Clear: Soy Protein Provides Heart Health Benefits

Author : SNI

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Soy protein lowers blood cholesterol levels according to years of scientific evidence¹⁻¹⁰ and the conclusions of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and health agencies in Canada¹¹ and 11 other countries.¹²

Nevertheless, the FDA recently announced it is proposing to change the existing heart health claim for soy protein. The possible change to a “qualified” health claim indicates that while the FDA believes the scientific evidence still supports consumption of soy protein as a means of lowering blood cholesterol levels, it recognizes there is some inconsistency in the results of recent clinical trials. However, no adverse effects were observed in these studies.

Such inconsistency is not at all unexpected as there is no nutrition research area where clinical studies have produced entirely consistent findings. This is true even for the effects of sodium on blood pressure^{13,14} and calcium on bone mineral density^{15,16} and yet reducing the intake of sodium is routinely recommended by nutritionists as a means of reducing risk of heart disease and increasing calcium intake as a means of preventing osteoporosis.

The Soy Nutrition Institute (SNI) provided data and comment to the FDA during the 75-day comment period that was opened by the FDA with the announcement of the possible change to the soy protein health claim. In addition to commenting on the cholesterol lowering effects of soy protein, other benefits were highlighted in [SNI comments](#).

While the mechanism behind the ability of soy protein to lower cholesterol levels in humans remains elusive, it has been observed that soyfoods can help to lower cholesterol levels by replacing commonly consumed sources of dietary protein because of the favorable change in the fatty acid content of the diet.¹ In fact, the cholesterol lowering effect of soybean oil was recently recognized by the FDA in the form of a heart health claim.¹⁷ Furthermore, there is intriguing evidence that there may be components of soybeans and soyfoods aside from the fat and protein that favorably affect a number of coronary heart disease risk factors.¹⁸⁻²¹

Soyfoods provide ample amounts of high-quality protein, so regardless of someone’s risk of developing coronary heart disease, adding soyfoods to the diet makes nutritional sense.²² Importantly, the nutrition community recognizes that to markedly reduce cholesterol levels and coronary heart disease risk requires adopting a comprehensive dietary approach. Because of their varied nutritional and health attributes, soyfoods and soy protein have been key components of

comprehensive dietary approaches that have led to dramatic reductions in cholesterol.²³⁻²⁸

Therefore, from a public health perspective, regardless of any possible change to the existing soy protein heart health claim the clinical evidence indicates that soyfoods can make important contributions to heart-healthy diets.

For more information about the nutrition and health attributes of soyfoods visit www.thesoynutritioninstitute.com. To view a webinar on this topic, go to <http://www.THESOYNUTRITIONINSTITUTE.COM/webinars/>.

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About the Soy Nutrition Institute

The mission of the Soy Nutrition Institute is to identify soy and health research priorities, provide evidence-based information on the impact of soybeans and soy components on human health through a variety of education and outreach efforts and, as funds may be available, facilitate the development and funding of targeted research projects.

The Soy Nutrition Institute is a collaborative organization begun in 2004 through the initiative of the United Soybean Board and soy industry leaders, including global corporations and national associations. Members meet at least twice annually to review and discuss research related to soy and health. Emerging issues are examined with presentations from experts in the field. Literature reviews and primary research are commissioned by SNI, as funding allows.

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