Overview

- Soy is a low-cost source of protein that has been consumed in Asian nations for many centuries.

- Regular intake of soy is thought to be partially responsible for the lower rates of heart disease and cancer observed in Eastern populations.

- Isoflavones are members of a large family of plant compounds called flavonoids, which in turn, are members of the larger group of plant constituents known as polyphenols.

- The principle isoflavones in soy are genistein, daidzein, and their metabolites.

- Isoflavone compounds are found in a number of plant sources; however, soybeans and soy products like tofu and texturized vegetable protein (TVP) are the primary food sources.

Proposed Health Effects

- Research shows the consumption of soy products to be associated with lower risks for breast cancer in premenopausal women and prostate cancer in men.

- In addition, the isoflavones found in soy are believed to play a role in bone health.

- Two human studies examining the effects of soy consumption on bone mineral loss in postmenopausal women found favorable effects on bone density/content.

- Lastly, soy has been shown to have several beneficial effects on cardiovascular health, with the best-documented effects seen on plasma lipid and lipoprotein concentrations. Soy intake can result in about 5% reduction of in low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and triglycerides, and about 2% increase in high density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol.