

Soy Isoflavone Concentrate (Glycine max)

Common Names: Soy bean, soy isoflavone is taken from the bean of the soy plant.

Location: Soy beans are grown in many countries around the world.

Description: The soy plant is a member of the legume family, which makes it able to intake Nitrogen from the air itself, and use this Nitrogen to nourish itself. Soy plants are grown extensively in the Midwestern United States.

Properties: The beans of the soy plant contain several medicinally useful chemicals, including isoflavones. The isoflavones most recognized as beneficial are daidzein and genistein, and the closely related compounds daidzin and genistin. These substances have been well researched for their antioxidant and phytoestrogenic properties.

Uses: Soy isoflavones are used medicinally primarily because of their estrogen-regulating properties.

Benefits of soy isoflavones for treatment of specific health conditions include the following: alzheimer's disease,

atherosclerosis, cancer, diabetic retinopathy, fracture, menopause-related problems, osteoporosis, as well as psoriasis.

Doses: The easiest way to get soy isoflavones is by taking soy isoflavone concentrate. Soy germ also can be used (preferably added to cereals or smoothies), as can cooked soybeans, miso, or tofu. Soy isoflavones are also found in the herb kudzu. Of readily available soy foods, roasted soybeans have the highest isoflavone content, about 167 milligrams for a 3.5ounce serving. Tempeh is next, with 60 milligrams, followed by soy flour, with 44 milligrams. Processed soy products, such as soy protein and soymilk contain about 20 milligrams per serving. Although the optimum dosage of isoflavones obtained from food is not known, one study found that ingesting 62 milligrams of isoflavones daily is sufficient to reduce cholesterol. Further, we know that Japanese women eat up to 200 milligrams of isoflavones from soy foods daily.

Warnings: Because isoflavones work somewhat like estrogen, there are concerns that they may not be safe for women who already have breast cancer. Preliminary studies and reports have raised concerns that intensive use of soy products by a pregnant woman could exert a hormonal effect that has an impact on the developing fetus. Soy isoflavones could theoretically interfere with the action of oral contraceptives, although studies have not yet confirmed this. Soy products may impair thyroid function or reduce absorption of thyroid medication, at least in children. People with impaired thyroid function should use soy in moderation or under medical supervision.