

QSSB Health and Nutrition Outreach

March 2023 Content

Article

More Soy for Kids: 5 Kid-Friendly Soy Foods Every Family Should Try

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The benefits of a plant-forward eating pattern, one that contains fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and plant-based oils, are well-established. Soy is part of the legume family and a nutrient-rich food, offering B vitamins, fiber, potassium, magnesium, and a source of high-quality protein.

The protein found in soy foods offers an array of essential amino acids, making it a complete protein, and soy is an affordable way to build more plant-based foods and protein into your family's diet.

Is soy safe for children?

Research has shown that soy is in fact safe for children and may help prevent breast cancer in girls later in life. (1) This is due to the presence of isoflavones which have anti-cancer properties. Not only do they play a role in the prevention of breast cancer, but isoflavones are linked to the prevention of heart disease and diabetes.

Whether you want to add more tasty plant foods to your family's eating pattern or you need to avoid dairy foods due to a food allergy, soy foods can be a nutritious addition to your family's diet. Here are 5 easy soy foods your family can try today!

Edamame

An easy, kid-friendly form of soy, edamame in the pod or shelled is a great snack. Add it to a meal like stir fry, soup, or pasta salad. For an easy, nutritious snack, serve it warmed, or sprinkle it with some Tajin (a Mexican spice of lime, salt, and a variety of peppers) to give it a little kick. It's fun for kids to shell edamame, too!

One serving = ½ cup

Tofu

Tofu is condensed soymilk that is pressed into a block, much like cheese. It contains protein and essential amino acids, like meat. It's nutrient-dense as it contains both macro- and micronutrients in relatively few calories. It's versatile, too. Add it to salads, creamy dips, soups, or smoothies. Strips of tofu are great for baby-led weaning or as a plant-based substitution for chicken fingers.

One serving = 3 oz

Soymilk

Soy milk is made by soaking soybeans, blending them with water, and removing the solids. Fortified soy milk is nutritionally similar to low-fat cow's milk, offering a source of protein, calcium, and vitamin D as well as other nutrients. Easy to find at most grocers, it's available in unsweetened and sweetened versions. Drink a glass of soy milk, pour it on cereal, or use it as a base for smoothies and desserts. For children with food allergies, fortified soy milk is recognized as a nutritious option by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. (2)

One serving = 1 cup

Tempeh

Tempeh is a traditional Indonesian food often made with soybeans. To make tempeh, the beans are partially cooked, cooled, and fermented into a cake that then must be cooked further. Like other soy foods, it's a good source of protein. It also contains iron and other nutrients. It can be cut into strips or cubes or crumbled to resemble ground meat. Use it in tacos, lasagna, and other dishes you might make with ground meat.

One serving = 3 oz

Miso

A fermented paste made from soybeans, miso has a salty, earthy, and savory flavor. There are different varieties of miso, ranging from light to dark, reflecting their ingredients and the time and conditions of fermentation. Soup is the obvious use of miso, but you can add it to noodles, mix it with butter and top cooked vegetables, make a marinade for meat or seafood, or lightly spread it on a sandwich. The uses are endless and fun to experiment with, especially if you're trying to expand your child's flavor palate.

Soy is a powerhouse protein that can help fuel your family fun. Which soy food will you try today?

[Jill Castle](#) is a pediatric dietitian and Founder of [The Nourished Child](#), a website and podcast for parents who want to nourish their children, inside and out.

REFERENCES:

1. *Health impact of childhood and adolescent soy consumption | Nutrition Reviews | Oxford Academic.* (n.d.). Retrieved February 5, 2023, from <https://academic.oup.com/nutritionreviews/article/75/7/500/3902926?login=false>
2. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025.* (n.d.). 164.

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