

Diet and Health Update

The Diet and Health Update is a regular feature in the Amberwaves Journal.

Miso Helps Offset Colon Cancer:

Miso fermented soybean paste commonly used in soup can help prevent colon cancer, according to a new study by Japanese scientists. In laboratory experiments, researchers at Hiroshima University reported that a diet high in long-term fermented miso significantly decreased induced colon tumors in contrast to the control diet, a diet high in short-term miso, or a diet high in salt. The present results indicate that aged or completely fermented miso supplemented into the diet, could act as a chemopreventive agent for colon carcinogenesis, the scientists concluded in the journal *Oncology Reports*.

Vegetarian Diet Cuts Cholesterol by a Third:

Canadian scientists have developed a diet high in grains, vegetables, soy products, and fruits and nuts that cuts cholesterol by nearly a third in just one month, according to a study published in *Metabolism*.

Researchers at the University of Toronto put 13 people on the vegetarian diet for a month and reported that average cholesterol levels, a major risk factor for heart disease, dropped 29%. Items served included oat bran bread, bean soup, and stir-fried vegetables and tofu. Prof. David Jenkins, head of the research team, said, the take home message right now is that there is hope for a drug-free treatment for some people with high cholesterol.

U.S. Vulnerable to Bioagricultural Attack:

The U.S. could face a devastating biological attack on its agricultural section. In a computer simulation, North Carolina veterinarians reported that a foot-and-mouth disease deliberately introduced in 5 sites around the country would spread within 2 weeks to 44 states and cause the destruction of 48.5 million cattle.

The epidemic could have a devastating effect on the nation's economy, not only in loss to farmers and food manufacturers, but would require hundreds of thousands of emergency health care workers to be mobilized. North Carolina alone would require nearly 25,000 people per day to handle containment, animal slaughter, testing, traffic control, and other needs.

Whole Grains Help Protect from Diabetes:

Adults need to eat more whole grains and grain products, according to researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard School of Medicine. In a study published in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, they presented data showing that whole grains are associated with lower risk of diabetes and coronary heart disease. It seems

prudent, therefore, to distinguish whole-grain rather than refined-grain cereal products for the prevention of chronic diseases, they concluded.

Tofu May Reduce Breast Cancer Risk:

Eating tofu and other traditional soy products significantly reduces a type of estrogen associated with breast cancer in postmenopausal women, according to a new study in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*.

Scientists at Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California found that women in Singapore who consume a high soy diet have reduced levels of estrone, a main type of estrogen in women after menopause and a risk factor in breast cancer development. Isoflavones, a principal nutrient in soybeans, are believed to be responsible for the protective effects.

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