

Good News for Infant Soy Formulas – Safe Over the Long-Term

In the largest study on the subject to date, researchers found that babies fed *infant soy formula* (not soy milk) do not appear to have different developmental outcomes later in life than babies fed cow's milk formula. Because soy products contain phytoestrogens – a plant chemical with hormonal actions – there has been some concern in the past that feeding soy-based foods to infants during growth and development may affect their future health. However, this was not shown to be the case.

In 811 adults who were fed either soy formula or regular cow's milk formula during infancy from 1965-1968, no positive or negative differences were observed in either men or women for over 30 factors that were studied. However, women who had been fed soy formula did report slightly longer duration of menstruation, but no difference in severity of flow.

The researchers found no significant differences in general health, onset of puberty, menstrual history, weight or height between those reared on either soy or cow's milk formulas.

Although these findings should continue to be explored through future studies, researchers wrote that their results provide reassurance about the safety of infant soy formula.

It is important to note that soy infant formulas are *specifically formulated for babies* (different than soy milks on the market). This research suggests that feeding infants on *soy formula* is safe over the long-term – good news for infants who are allergic to cow's milk or for parents who wish to raise their children on a carefully-planned vegetarian diet.

References:

Strom, BL, Schinnar, R, Ziegler, EE, Barnhart, KT, Sammel, MD, Macones, GA, Stallings, VA, Drulis, JM, Nelson, SE, Hanson, SA. (2001) "Exposure to Soy-Based Formula in Infancy and Endocrinological and Reproductive Outcomes in Young Adulthood," *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 286(7): 807-814.