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Perhaps a look at the chemical properties of soybean will reveal its healthful benefits. Soybeans contain both soluble and insoluble fiber that can help regulate intestinal function and reduce cholesterol levels. In addition, soybeans contain a significant amount of calcium, magnesium, and zinc, and are a source of B-complex vitamins, such as thiamine, niacin, riboflavin, and vitamin-B6.

A possible explanation for the anti-cancer effects seen with soy is that soy contains nutritionally significant amounts of the genestein and diadzein, as seen in the table below (The Soy Report):

Genestein and diadzein are two types of isoflavones, which are phytoestrogens, or plant estrogens. They are believed to enhance the survival of soybeans because they possess antifungal, antimicrobial, and antioxidant properties. Isoflavones structurally resemble estradiol, which is the primary estrogen in mammals. Among its many functions, estradiol can stimulate cell proliferation. In estrogen-responsive cells, estradiol enters the cell and binds to intracellular estrogen receptors, or ERs. This new complex moves to DNA and acts as a transcription factor to initialize transcription. Since isoflavones closely resemble mammalian estrogen, it is possible that soy isoflavones can bind to the ERs of cancer cells and prevent estradiol from binding to the ER and stimulating growth.

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