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## **SOY MAY HELP PREVENT OVARIAN CANCER, STUDY FINDS**

**Lower risk of ovarian cancer found in California women who consume soy**

**FREMONT, CA** – *March 13, 2007* – Scientists at the Northern California Cancer Center, University of California, Irvine, University of Southern California and the California Department of Health Services are studying the role of isoflavones (the primary phytoestrogen found in soy-based foods) in the onset of cancer and have found that moderate intake of these compounds can lead to lower risk of developing ovarian cancer.

Several previous studies have shown little or no association between diet and risk of ovarian cancer. This new study, however, suggests that some aspects of diet, specifically the consumption of isoflavones, may play a role in decreasing ovarian cancer risk. Ovarian cancer is the sixth most common and seventh most deadly disease in women worldwide.

Researchers examined the diets of nearly 100,000 women in the California Teachers Study, which is comprised of active and retired female public school teachers and administrators from California. Despite the low consumption of soy in the typical “western” diet, researchers found that women who consumed an average of at least 1 serving per week of isoflavone-rich foods had approximately 40 percent lower risk of ovarian cancer than women who consumed less. One serving equals one half-cup serving of tofu or one cup of regular soy milk, which contains 25 to 30 milligrams of isoflavones.

The study results are consistent with the suggestion that the higher consumption of soy products in other populations, most notably certain Asian populations, may be partly responsible for their lower incidence rate of ovarian cancer compared to the U.S. population.

“In this group of female teachers in California, we found that many foods and nutrients—for example, fruits, vegetables, antioxidant vitamins, and fat—were not linked to risk of ovarian cancer. However, we went into this study with the main hypothesis that dietary intake of isoflavones might help lower the risk of ovarian cancer, so it was encouraging to see that theory pan out in our data,” says lead author Ellen Chang, Sc.D., of the Northern California Cancer Center.

Isoflavones are believed to decrease levels of estrogen in the body through a variety of ways. Because high estrogen levels appear to promote the development of ovarian cancer, it makes biological sense that lowering estrogen levels through consumption of isoflavones could in turn lead to reduced risk of ovarian cancer.

“The potential anti-cancer effects of phytoestrogens, including isoflavones and resveratrol, which is found in red wine, are an exciting area of research,” says Chang. “This is a focus of active epidemiological investigation here at the Northern California Cancer Center.”

The study, “Diet and Ovarian Cancer Risk in California,” is currently published online only in the January 8, 2007 Advance Access section of the *American Journal of Epidemiology* website and will be included in an upcoming print issue of the journal. The abstract for the study can be found at: <http://aje.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/kwk065v1>

#### About Northern California Cancer Center

The Northern California Cancer Center ([www.nccc.org](http://www.nccc.org)) is an established, nationally recognized leader dedicated to understanding the causes and prevention of cancer and to improve the quality of life for individuals living with cancer. NCCC has been working with scientists, educators, patients, clinicians, and community leaders successfully since 1974, and is an active partner with Stanford University’s Comprehensive Cancer Center. NCCC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit with over 170 employees and a \$15 million operating budget.