The Grading System Behind the Rankings

You've probably been advised You've probably been advised to avoid soy during to avoid soy during menopause, but the menopause, but the best research on best research on hot flashes suggests hot flashes suggests otherwise.

otherwise. Today is a real Today is a real ranking from ranking from worst to worst to best. Welcome best. Welcome back to my channel. I am Dr. Elizabeth. I am Dr. Elizabeth Tuddiken, a Tuddiken, a licensed licensed licensed naturopath naturopath naturopath practicing here in practicing here in sunny Arizona. And sunny Arizona. And before we get started, before we get started, I want to sincerely thank I want to sincerely thank everyone who has recently everyone who has recently signed up. I am very signed up. I am very grateful to each of you.

grateful to each of you. I'm glad you found I'm glad you found this channel, and I really this channel, and I really appreciate your comments. appreciate your comments.

I read them all and love I read them all and love to connect with you to connect with you there as much as there as much as possible. So please possible. So please keep keep keep writing. In my writing. In my practice, women practice, women constantly ask constantly ask if soy is safe or if if soy is safe or if it is dangerous. This is it is dangerous. This is one of the one of the most common most common most common questions I get.

At the end of the video, you At the end of the video, you will know which will know which products really products really help with help with symptoms and which ones are just unnecessary noise. We'll just unnecessary noise. We'll break everything down by break everything down by category, from category, from worst to worst to best: products best: products that are harmful, those that that are harmful, those that help but aren't help but aren't magic, and those with the magic, and those with the strongest evidence strongest evidence base. And one of the base. And one of the best is a best is a product you've product you've probably been avoiding for probably been avoiding for years. Before I years. Before I grade anything, I'll show you the grade anything, I'll show you the grading system I grading system I use for use for nutrition research, because not everything you nutrition research, because not everything you read about food and read about food and menopause carries the menopause carries the same weight. Here is the same weight. Here is the problem you are problem you are facing. On the outside, facing. On the outside, you have a bunch of articles you have a bunch of articles saying the opposite saying the opposite about the same product. And inside—it's. And inside—it's exhausting. You exhausting. You doubt yourself in doubt yourself in the store, and somewhere the store, and somewhere deep down there is a feeling deep down there is a feeling that understanding that understanding your own body shouldn't your own body shouldn't be so complicated.

So let me be So let me be clear. If clear. If you're over 40 and have you're over 40 and have been getting been getting been getting conflicting advice conflicting advice about the same food about the same food for a week, it doesn't seem like it for a week, it doesn't seem like it. This is an. This is an information problem, not your information problem, not your problem. Here's how I problem. Here's how I figure it out. Some figure it out. Some claims come claims come from randomized from randomized trials. One trials. One group changed their diet, the group changed their diet, the other didn't, and other didn't, and the researchers measured the the researchers measured the difference. This is strong difference. This is strong evidence. Other evidence. Other claims are based claims are based on biological on biological mechanisms that are mechanisms that are logical but have not yet logical but have not yet been tested by large been tested by large studies in terms of studies in terms of symptom relief. This is a promising. This is a promising hypothesis, not proof.

hypothesis, not proof. Think of it as two types of Think of it as two types of routes to the same routes to the same place. One is from a place. One is from a friend who actually friend who actually traveled this route and traveled this route and recorded the time. Another is from recorded the time. Another is from a stranger who is a stranger who is pretty sure that pretty sure that "it looks like it's that "it looks like it's that way." Both can way." Both can get you where you get you where you need to go, but the first is need to go, but the first is much more reliable.

So, as I go through each So, as I go through each level, I'll level, I'll be talking about what be talking about what evidence there is for each evidence there is for each product, not just whether I product, not just whether I like it.

like it. Let's start with the level on Let's start with the level on which it is easiest to reach which it is easiest to reach agreement. What is working against agreement.

Worst Tier Starts With Alcohol

What is working against you? First on the list of you? First on the list of the worst is alcohol, the worst is alcohol, which for many which for many women is the same women is the same evening drink evening drink they turn to to they turn to to relieve the stress of relieve the stress of menopause. Here is the menopause. Here is the pattern.

pattern. pattern. Alcohol has a clear Alcohol has a clear relationship between dose and relationship between dose and the body's response in the body's response in the form of hot flashes and the form of hot flashes and night sweats: night sweats: the more you drink, the more you drink, the higher the chances. In the higher the chances. In one large one large study, study, study, the likelihood increased the likelihood increased from 40% for those who drank from 40% for those who drank less than one drink per less than one drink per day to about day to about three and a half times three and a half times higher for those who drank higher for those who drank four or more four or more drinks. And here's why.

drinks. And here's why. Alcohol dilates Alcohol dilates blood vessels, which blood vessels, which causes the same causes the same redness and heat redness and heat as a hot flash. So if as a hot flash. So if you're already prone to them, you're already prone to them, the drink adds another the drink adds another trigger on top of the trigger on top of the hormonal one. Now an hormonal one. Now an important note important note about the evidence. This about the evidence. This study study study was conducted among was conducted among Korean women, Korean women, so take the so take the exact numbers as a exact numbers as a general trend and general trend and not a universal not a universal rule. But if rule. But if your hot flashes your hot flashes are more frequent in the evening, this is where you are more frequent in the evening, this is where you should start should start reviewing your reviewing your diet. It's at that diet. It's at that moment when you moment when you reach for the glass, reach for the glass, not because of the wine itself.

Added Sugar and Refined Carbs

The next product at next product at this level is the one that this level is the one that almost almost almost everyone feels everyone feels guilty about. Next on guilty about. Next on the list of the worst is the food we the food we resort to on our hardest resort to on our hardest days. Added sugar and days. Added sugar and refined carbohydrates. Most people. Most people think of it as a think of it as a weight problem, not a weight problem, not a hot flash problem. But blood sugar fluctuations from blood sugar fluctuations from refined refined refined carbohydrates add carbohydrates add another level of another level of temperature and temperature and energy energy energy instability to the instability to the hormonal hormonal hormonal fluctuations fluctuations fluctuations causing your causing your symptoms. Here is the evidence. A nine-year nine-year study of study of over 6,000 women over 6,000 women found that a diet found that a diet high in high in fat and sugar was fat and sugar was linked to linked to more frequent hot flashes more frequent hot flashes and night sweats.

Whereas the Whereas the Mediterranean Mediterranean Mediterranean diet, with diet, with a lot of a lot of fruit, has fewer of them fruit, has fewer of them. This is. This is an observation of a an observation of a pattern, not a pattern, not a rule about a rule about a single ingredient. This doesn't mean you. This doesn't mean you should never eat should never eat sugar, but if you sugar, but if you continue to continue to continue to overindulge in sweets, overindulge in sweets, evidence suggests that evidence suggests that your hot flashes and your hot flashes and sleep quality will take a sleep quality will take a toll.

Caffeine and the Two Sided Trade Off

The third one at this level, and it's something, and it's something most people don't expect— caffeine. A morning

caffeine. A morning boost that you boost that you can pay for can pay for at night. Caffeine is a at night. Caffeine is a stimulant, and in stimulant, and in some women it some women it triggers the same triggers the same vasomotor response vasomotor response that we just that we just talked about with talked about with alcohol. The same alcohol. The same reaction of redness reaction of redness and heat. But it also and heat. But it also sharpens alertness sharpens alertness and improves mood in the and improves mood in the short short short term. And that is why term. And that is why this compromise this compromise has two sides.

has two sides. A study of A study of just over just over 1,800 women found a 1,800 women found a link between caffeine link between caffeine and more frequent and more frequent hot flashes and night hot flashes and night sweats, but also sweats, but also fewer fewer fewer problems with mood, problems with mood, memory, and memory, and concentration. This is concentration. This is an observational study, not a an observational study, not a controlled controlled controlled trial. So trial. So take this as a take this as a pattern, not pattern, not as proof that a as proof that a particular cup particular cup causes a particular causes a particular flush. If your flush. If your hot flashes are more frequent hot flashes are more frequent during the day or at night, during the day or at night, try try try cutting back on cutting back on caffeine after caffeine after noon before noon before cutting it out cutting it out completely. So, completely. So, caffeine is a compromise, caffeine is a compromise, not a clear not a clear warning. Consider warning. Consider this based on how you this based on how you actually actually actually feel in the morning.

feel in the morning. Before I move on to Before I move on to the rest of the the rest of the worst list, I want to worst list, I want to say one thing. I say one thing. I have prepared a have prepared a have prepared a free free free resource where all these resource where all these products are ranked products are ranked on one page, on one page, from worst to from worst to best, best, best, indicating the strength of indicating the strength of evidence for each.

evidence for each. So, you will be able to So, you will be able to make purchases make purchases based on it based on it without having to watch the without having to watch the video again.

video again. The link is in the description. The link is in the description.

Ultra-Processed Foods

Download it when it's Download it when it's convenient for you and we'll convenient for you and we'll get back to the get back to the list. Last in list. Last in the category of the worst is the silent enemy that silent enemy that accumulates accumulates accumulates unnoticed.

unnoticed. unnoticed. Ultra-processed Ultra-processed Ultra-processed foods. Packaged, foods. Packaged, ultra-processed ultra-processed ultra-processed foods usually foods usually contain a lot of contain a lot of refined refined refined carbohydrates, little carbohydrates, little fiber, and many fiber, and many additives at the same time.

So it's not so much So it's not so much adding a new adding a new problem as it is problem as it is combining several combining several patterns that patterns that we just looked at we just looked at into one. A 2025 study of over 300 postmenopausal women over 300 postmenopausal women found that higher found that higher consumption of consumption of consumption of ultra-processed ultra-processed ultra-processed foods was associated with foods was associated with heavier hot flashes, heavier hot flashes, sweating, and sweating, and sleep problems, sleep problems, though not mood though not mood or urogenital or urogenital symptoms. This is a symptoms. This is a correlation, correlation, correlation, so there is no guarantee so there is no guarantee that giving up these that giving up these products on their products on their own will fix anything.

own will fix anything. But if your main But if your main complaints are hot flashes, complaints are hot flashes, sweating, or sweating, or trouble sleeping, you might want to trouble sleeping, you might want to start by start by reviewing the packaged reviewing the packaged foods in your foods in your diet. This diet. This concludes the concludes the worst category. And here's a worst category. And here's a surprise waiting for surprise waiting for you here. Giving up you here.

Good Tier Cruciferous Vegetables

Giving up something doesn't always something doesn't always mean giving up mean giving up what hurts what hurts the most. Let's move on the most. Let's move on to what actually to what actually helps you. Now for the good stuff, the good stuff, and let's start with the vegetables and let's start with the vegetables that are most actively that are most actively promoted as promoted as hormone hormone hormone balancers: balancers: balancers: cruciferous vegetables, cruciferous vegetables, broccoli, cabbage, and broccoli, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts. These vegetables contain a. These vegetables contain a compound that the body compound that the body converts into a converts into a substance called substance called DIM, and DIM changes DIM, and DIM changes the way estrogen is metabolized the way estrogen is metabolized and excreted and excreted. Think of DIM. Think of DIM as an instruction manual that as an instruction manual that changes the way changes the way estrogen exits estrogen exits your body. This your body. This mechanism is well mechanism is well studied.

studied. studied. We have less direct evidence We have less direct evidence on on on how much it actually how much it actually changes symptoms, changes symptoms, at least compared at least compared to the data on soy, to the data on soy, which will be discussed in the which will be discussed in the best category. Here's what the. Here's what the evidence shows. A study of evidence shows. A study of 365 women 365 women who had survived breast cancer found that higher found that higher consumption of consumption of consumption of cruciferous vegetables cruciferous vegetables was associated with a lower was associated with a lower likelihood of likelihood of likelihood of menopausal symptoms, menopausal symptoms, with the strongest with the strongest effect seen effect seen in one subgroup.

So, the mechanism of action is So, the mechanism of action is well-founded, but the well-founded, but the evidence base is weaker evidence base is weaker than that of those that would be in the than that of those that would be in the best category.

best category. And that's why it And that's why it falls into the falls into the "good" category, "good" category, not the "best." It is not the "best." It is safe and worth safe and worth adding to your adding to your diet. Just don't diet. Just don't expect it to expect it to solve all your solve all your problems on its own. The problems on its own.

Omega-3s and the Honest Evidence

The second product in the second product in the “good” category is what is most often is what is most often advertised as a mood enhancer: omega-3s and mood enhancer: omega-3s and fatty fish. Omega-3s fatty fish. Omega-3s calm inflammatory calm inflammatory signals in the body.

This is a well-studied This is a well-studied pathway, which is why they are pathway, which is why they are so actively so actively promoted for promoted for mood support mood support during menopause.

during menopause. But here's what the But here's what the real evidence looks like. In a real evidence looks like. In a qualitative qualitative qualitative study, 120 women study, 120 women with psychological with psychological distress distress distress took either took either omega-3 or a placebo for 8 weeks. In the omega-3 or a placebo for 8 weeks. In the entire group, omega-3 did entire group, omega-3 did not significantly improve not significantly improve distress or distress or depressive symptoms. There was some benefit, was some benefit, of course, but only in a of course, but only in a smaller subgroup—in smaller subgroup—in women who did not have women who did not have major depressive major depressive episodes at the start.

This is a solid This is a solid study with study with mixed mixed mixed results, and this is the results, and this is the part you part you don't usually hear about don't usually hear about when omega-3s are when omega-3s are touted as a touted as a menopause cure. It's menopause cure. It's still very important for still very important for your heart and brain. Just don't. Just don't expect expect expect fatty fish alone to save your fatty fish alone to save your mood. This mood. This concludes the concludes the "good" category. Now "good" category.

Best Tier Whole Soy Foods

Now we move on to the we move on to the category of the “best” category of the “best” and most and most unfairly unfairly unfairly maligned product maligned product on the entire list. So, the on the entire list. So, the "best of" category, and we'll start with a, and we'll start with a product that product that most women on most women on this list have this list have quietly avoided for years—soy. In quietly avoided for years—soy. In my practice, fear of my practice, fear of soy is one of the soy is one of the most common most common most common mistakes I have to mistakes I have to correct. And it's correct. And it's almost always the almost always the same fear: that soy is same fear: that soy is estrogenic and therefore estrogenic and therefore must be dangerous.

This fear This fear spreads on spreads on the internet faster than the internet faster than any rigorous 12- week clinical week clinical study with study with real numbers.

Therefore, this issue Therefore, this issue deserves a direct deserves a direct correction, without correction, without any hesitation. If any hesitation. If you've avoided soy for years because someone scared you, you're not behind in, you're not behind in life, and it's not your life, and it's not your fault. You were simply fault. You were simply given false given false information. So why wo information. So why wo n't this fear go n't this fear go away? Let's away? Let's see what the best best research we have actually shows. In a research we have actually shows. In a randomized randomized randomized controlled controlled controlled trial, 84 trial, 84 postmenopausal women with postmenopausal women with frequent hot flashes frequent hot flashes followed a followed a followed a plant-based diet that plant-based diet that included about half included about half a cup of cooked a cup of cooked whole soybeans whole soybeans per day. After 12 per day. After 12 weeks, the number of weeks, the number of hot flashes in the soy group decreased by 88% compared to 34% in the compared to 34% in the control group. And control group. And half of the women in the half of the women in the soy group soy group got rid of them got rid of them completely. Give yourself a completely. Give yourself a minute to minute to realize this. Half of realize this. Half of these women got rid of these women got rid of moderate to severe hot moderate to severe hot flashes within 12 flashes within 12 weeks thanks to weeks thanks to diet, not diet, not supplements. This is not supplements. This is not an assumption, this is what the most thorough most thorough research we research we have actually shows. Whole soy have actually shows. Whole soy products—edamame, products—edamame, products—edamame, tofu, tempeh, whole tofu, tempeh, whole soybeans—are one soybeans—are one of the most of the most proven dietary proven dietary remedies for remedies for hot flashes. However, it is hot flashes. However, it is important to pay important to pay attention to how you attention to how you buy them. Choose buy them. Choose organic whole organic whole soybeans. Most of the soybeans. Most of the conventional soybeans conventional soybeans grown here are grown here are genetically genetically genetically modified and modified and treated with treated with treated with glyphosate. Therefore, I glyphosate. Therefore, I direct patients direct patients to organic to organic whole soy whole soy products, avoiding products, avoiding highly processed highly processed soy isolates and soy isolates and protein powders. Ideally,. Ideally, fermented fermented fermented forms such as tempeh, forms such as tempeh, miso, and natto should be consumed along miso, and natto should be consumed along with tofu, as with tofu, as fermentation makes it easier to fermentation makes it easier to digest soy and digest soy and absorb its absorb its nutrients.

nutrients. Whole, organic, and Whole, organic, and fermented—this is how fermented—this is how soy provides the soy provides the most benefits. most benefits.

Now about something Now about something important that I want important that I want to be frank about. I don't to be frank about. I don't recommend soy for everyone and recommend soy for everyone and not at every stage of not at every stage of life. I work with life. I work with each person each person individually to individually to develop a develop a develop a therapeutic diet therapeutic diet that is right for them. There are times and. There are times and certain age groups certain age groups where I advise avoiding where I advise avoiding soy for a period of time and soy for a period of time and then gradually re- then gradually re- introducing it during introducing it during perimenopause and perimenopause and menopause. So, this is not menopause. So, this is not a call for everyone to eat a call for everyone to eat soy forever. The fact is soy forever. The fact is that soy that soy has been unfairly feared, but for has been unfairly feared, but for many women at many women at this stage of life, the this stage of life, the evidence suggests that it is evidence suggests that it is worth including in their diet.

We're just We're just figuring out together what's right for figuring out together what's right for you. you. you. This is a victory for soybeans This is a victory for soybeans in the fight against in the fight against tides. The last tides. The

last product on the list product on the list earned its place earned its place due to its overall due to its overall health effects.

health effects.

The Mediterranean Pattern of Eating

Last on the list, and Last on the list, and it's not just one it's not just one product, is the Mediterranean Mediterranean Mediterranean diet. diet. diet.

This eating style This eating style consistently proves to be consistently proves to be protective. Remember protective. Remember that 9-year that 9-year study we study we talked about earlier? The one that talked about earlier? The one that linked a diet linked a diet high in high in fat and sugar to fat and sugar to more frequent hot flashes? The same study, using the? The same study, using the same sample, same sample, found that a found that a Mediterranean- Mediterranean- Mediterranean- style diet with style diet with lots of lots of fruit was associated with fruit was associated with fewer fewer fewer hot flashes. Exact hot flashes. Exact mirror mirror mirror image.

image. Practically, these are vegetables, Practically, these are vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fruits, whole grains, olive oil, fish, olive oil, fish, and whole soy and whole soy products, based products, based on natural foods, on natural foods, not packages. And here not packages. And here I will add something that is I will add something that is very important to me. The origin of food also origin of food also matters.

matters. matters. Foods grown on Foods grown on healthy, well-maintained healthy, well-maintained land contain more of the land contain more of the nutrients nutrients your your body actually needs. So when body actually needs. So when you can, reach out you can, reach out to farmers to farmers markets, local markets, local farms, or farms, or CSA programs. Fresher, CSA programs. Fresher, nutrient-rich nutrient-rich nutrient-rich food will do food will do more for you than more for you than the same product the same product that traveled two that traveled two weeks to the counter. And weeks to the counter. And if you live where it's if you live where it's hard to find quality, hard to find quality, fresh, organic fresh, organic produce, don't skip the produce, don't skip the frozen section. It frozen section. It surprises people, but surprises people, but frozen organic frozen organic produce can be produce can be fresher than what's fresher than what's on the shelves. They on the shelves. They are harvested and flash- are harvested and flash- frozen immediately frozen immediately after harvest, which after harvest, which helps preserve helps preserve nutrients.

nutrients. Whereas fresh Whereas fresh produce loses produce loses them during them during transportation and transportation and storage on storage on store shelves. A study from the study from the University of California, University of California, Davis, Davis, Davis, comparing fresh, comparing fresh, refrigerated, and refrigerated, and frozen fruits and frozen fruits and vegetables found that vegetables found that frozen versions frozen versions retain vitamins retain vitamins just as well, and just as well, and sometimes better, than sometimes better, than fresh ones that have been fresh ones that have been refrigerated for several refrigerated for several days. So, days. So, frozen organic frozen organic products are a good products are a good choice, not a compromise. This is what root-cause nutrition really looks like. This is not a collection of rules that must be that must be followed flawlessly. It's about giving your. It's about giving your body the body the resources it resources it knows exactly what to do with.

knows exactly what to do with. This is the entire list of This is the entire list of categories. Let's categories. Let's summarize. So, here's the summarize. So, here's the full picture. Your full picture. Your body doesn't body doesn't get confused about food.

The advice about it creates confusion. The worst category— alcohol, added alcohol, added sugar, caffeine, and sugar, caffeine, and ultra-processed ultra-processed ultra-processed foods—all of which lead foods—all of which lead to more frequent to more frequent hot flashes and worse hot flashes and worse sleep. The good category —cruciferous vegetables —cruciferous vegetables and omega-3s—gives you and omega-3s—gives you solid mechanisms solid mechanisms but has somewhat weaker but has somewhat weaker evidence. So let evidence.

So let them help without them help without expecting a miracle from them. And the best. And the best category—whole category—whole category—whole soy products that are soy products that are organic and a organic and a Mediterranean- Mediterranean- Mediterranean- style diet—has style diet—has the strongest evidence of the the strongest evidence of the entire list. Soy, entire list. Soy, in particular, should in particular, should be consumed with confidence, be consumed with confidence, not fear. Your not fear. Your body knows how to body knows how to heal itself. I'm here heal itself. I'm here to help to help remove what's standing remove what's standing in the way. If you in the way. If you want honest, evidence-based information, evidence-based information, not internet noise, this channel is for you.

Subscribe and you won't Subscribe and you won't miss any miss any new videos we new videos we release. And if you're release. And if you're trying trying trying to understand why your weight to understand why your weight doesn't move even doesn't move even when you eat less, when you eat less, I have a I have a video coming out about that. Stay tuned video coming out about that. Stay tuned