

# Health Benefits of Chia Seeds



Chia seeds originated in Mexico and Guatemala and were part of Aztec and Mayan culture for thousands of years. They were used as food, cosmetics and included in religious rituals. “Chian” is a Spanish word for “oily” referring to its quality unsaturated fats, particularly the essential omega-3. Of all foods, chia seeds contain the highest concentration of this healthy fat.

Like other seeds, chia is rich in nutrition. The combination of high protein, high fiber and antioxidants give these seeds disease-protecting capacity to lower risk for heart disease, diabetes, stroke, obesity and inflammation.

Chia seeds have a mild, nutty flavor and work well in a variety of recipes. They are gluten free making them a good choice for those with Celiac disease.

## WHAT MAKES CHIA SEEDS GREAT?

### *Nutrition*

2 Tbsp chia seeds provides 140 Calories, 4 gm protein, 11 gm fiber, 7 gm fat, no cholesterol.

### *Protein*

Chia seeds contain all 9 essential amino acids necessary to build protein in the body, giving chia seeds the designation of a complete protein. The advantage to using plant sources of protein, like chia seeds, is that, unlike animal-based sources like meat and dairy, chia seeds are rich in antioxidants and contain only trace amounts of saturated fat and no cholesterol.

### *Fat*

Anywhere between 60-75% of the fat in chia seeds consists of the essential omega-3, Alpha-linolenic acid. Omega-3 intake is associated with lower risk of heart attack and stroke.

### *Fiber*

Chia seeds are an excellent source of dietary fiber, in particular, soluble fiber. These fibers help to blunt blood sugar spikes, lower cholesterol, and contribute to feelings of fullness for weight management. They are also a source of food (pre-biotic) for healthy gut bacteria.

Chia seeds also contain insoluble fiber, which helps relieve constipation and reduces risk of hemorrhoids, diverticulosis and colorectal cancer.

### *Vitamins*

Chia seeds are loaded with antioxidants which fight free radical damage that can lead to aging and disease. Some of these antioxidants include chlorogenic acid, caffeic acid, myricetin, quercetin and kaempferol which each play a role in lowering blood pressure, inflammation and risk of chronic diseases.

### *Minerals*

Chia seeds are high in minerals that support bone health including calcium, phosphorus and magnesium. Magnesium is also important for muscle contraction, including that of the heart.

## BUYING & USING CHIA SEEDS

Chia seeds can be black, white or mixed. Both can be used interchangeably although white seeds may make a better flour. Most grocery stores carry chia seeds in sealed packages. Once the package is opened, refrigerate or freeze to protect the healthy fats from oxidation.

Many new products are showing up on the market that include chia seeds, since they are highly nutritious and do not trigger allergies. Look for chia seeds added to biscuits, pasta, cereal bars, snack, yogurt, breads, muffins and chips.

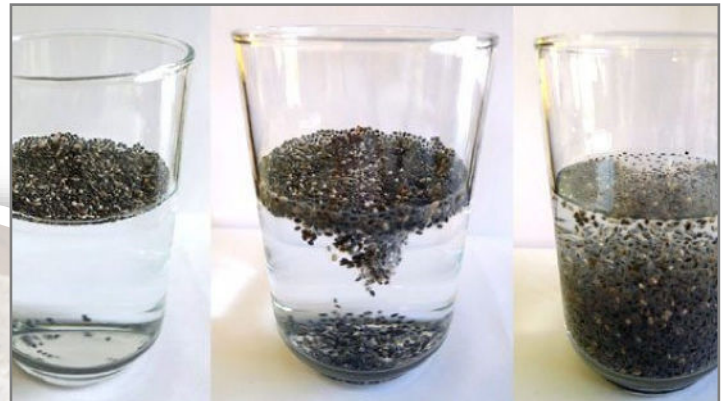


**Oregon State**  
University

stephanie.polizzi@oregonstate.edu  
631 Alder Street, Myrtle Point, OR 97458  
541-572-5263 ext 25291  
<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/coos/healthy-families-communities>

It is easy to use chia seeds, which can be eaten raw or cooked. Sprinkle in salads, oatmeal, pancakes or baked goods. Add to veggie sides, hummus or salad dressings. Soak chia seeds in water, non-dairy milk or other liquid to make puddings or jams. Swap morning cereal with a chia breakfast. Soak chia seeds overnight in soy or almond milk. Add nuts, blueberries or banana and spices like cinnamon or vanilla. Serve hot or cold.

Lower saturated fat and cholesterol in recipes by using chia seeds as an egg replacer. Combine 1 Tbsp chia seeds with 3 Tbsp water. Stir and let rest 5 minutes before adding to recipe. Use this in place of each egg in the recipe.



## Chia Tortillas

starletmom.com

gluten free, vegan

### Ingredients:

2 Tbsp chia seeds	1/2 c buckwheat flour
1/4 c water	1 Tbsp coconut oil
1/4 c tapioca flour	1/3 tsp salt

### Directions:

1. Combine water and chia seeds, mixing well, and let sit for 5 minutes.
2. Mix all dry ingredients and add to chia mixture. Stir in coconut oil.
3. Roll dough into circles. If dough is cracking, add more coconut oil. Too sticky, add more buckwheat flour.
4. Fry tortilla in a pan on medium heat for a few minutes, until golden brown. Flip once.

## Banana Chia Pudding

Simple-veganista.com

### Ingredients:

2 large, ripe or overripe bananas  
2 c unsweetened coconut, almond or cashew milk  
6 Tbsp chia seeds

### Optional:

Pure maple syrup  
Vanilla extract

### Directions:

1. In medium bowl, mash bananas. Stir in non-dairy milk and chia seeds and mix.
2. Let set about 30 minutes and stir and repeat stir after another 30 minutes.
3. Cover and place in refrigerator overnight or 6 hours.
4. Garnish with coconut flakes, shaved chocolate or sliced bananas.

## Chia Seed Crackers

holistichabits.com

### Ingredients:

1 c chia seeds  
5 c water  
Sea salt

### Optional:

spices, herbs, other seeds like sesame, hemp or pumpkin

### Directions:

1. Stir water into chia seeds and let sit 10-20 minutes until gelatinous.
2. Add sea salt, spices, herbs or other seeds as desired.
3. Spread on dehydrator sheet and dehydrate at 107F for 12 hours, flipping halfway through.
4. Try spreading crackers with salsa and cilantro and topping with a sprinkle of hemp seeds. Or serve with hummus and cucumber.

## REFERENCES

Choosingchia.com  
Eatright.org  
Hsph.harvard.edu/  
Nutritiondata.self.com  
Ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets