

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

Chia Seeds



by Doreen Spackman, MH

One of my favorite things to do is to eat, so I am always on the lookout for food with nutrition, flavor, and ease of fixing. The tiny chia seed is from the *Salvia hispanica* plant that grows in Southern Mexico and is part of the mint family. The Aztecs used to use this for their warriors when they were going on a forced march - they would eat only a teaspoon of this energy packed food.

The chia seed is fun to eat - you can put it on your tongue and it will turn into a gel substance (just as it will in any liquid). Whether I'm teaching classes on grains and nutrition or at family gatherings, the "magic chia seed" has been the biggest hit because it magically changes in your mouth to a gel and the flavor is mild even for those unaccustomed to eating grains and seeds in their whole and natural state.

It can absorb more than 12 times its weight in water, thus prolonging hydration. This helps in maintaining the balance and utilization of nutrients, moisture, and electrolytes in the body. This is great for digestion as it slows the conversion of carbohydrates into sugar, so for those with diabetes or glycemic issues this is great news.

Dr. Wayne Coates states that the chia seed is 16% protein, 31% fat, and 44% carbohydrate, of which 38% is fiber. Most of its fat is the essential omega-3 fatty acid alpha-linolenic acid or ALA, according to the (USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 20 (2007)). Chia provides fiber (about 2 tablespoons--25 g--give you 7 g of fiber) as well as other important nutrients, including calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, manganese, copper, niacin, and zinc.

The protein is easily digested and absorbed allowing it to get from tissue to cells quickly. This makes regeneration of tissue for many things in life better, whether you are an athlete, growing child or anyone needing the regeneration of tissue. It is also great for endurance. I have noticed a significant difference in my energy level throughout the day staying strong along with staying hydrated. The chia seed is definitely a great thing to eat on a daily basis.

In the article "Chia Seed-The Ancient Food of the Future" by William Anderson, it says the Chia seed is its high oil content, and the richest vegetable source for the essential omega-3 fatty acid. It has approximately three to ten times the oil concentrations of most grains and one and a half to two times the protein concentrations of other grains. These oils, unsaturated fatty acids, are the essential oils your body needs to help emulsify and absorb the fat soluble vitamins, A, D, E, & K. Chia seeds are rich in the unsaturated fatty acid, linoleic, which the body cannot manufacture. When there are rich

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amounts of linoleic acid sufficiently supplied to the body through diet, linoleic and arachidonic acids can be synthesized from linoleic acid.

Unsaturated fatty acids are important for respiration of vital organs and make it easier for oxygen to be transported by the blood stream to all cells, tissues, and organs. They also help maintain resilience and lubrication of all cells and combine with protein and cholesterol to form living membranes that hold the body cells together.

Unsaturated fatty acids are essential for normal glandular activity, especially of the adrenal glands and the thyroid gland. They nourish the skin cells and are essential for healthy mucus membranes and nerves. The unsaturated fatty acids function in the body by cooperating with vitamin D in making calcium available to the tissues, assisting in the assimilation of phosphorus, and stimulating the conversion of carotene into vitamin A. Fatty acids are related to normal functioning of the reproductive system. Chia seeds contain beneficial long-chain triglycerides (LCT) in the right proportion to reduce cholesterol on arterial walls.

The Chia seed is also a rich source of calcium as it contains the important mineral boron, which acts as catalyst for the absorption and utilization of the calcium by the body.

I love living at a time where we have so many foods available to us from all over the world. They are fun to eat and so nutritious!

Enjoy Healthy Eating,
Doreen

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