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9 benefits of chia seeds – and when they're not safe

Kim Kardashian's chia pudding went viral on TikTok, and Taylor Swift sprinkles chia seeds on meals to help her stay slim. These days, chia seeds aren't just for Hollywood stars and can be found in most supermarkets and health food stores, but do they really live up to their health hype? We explore nine potential health benefits of chia seeds, and look at whether this ingredient is safe for everyone.

Are chia seeds a superfood?

Chia seeds are small black-grey seeds. Like other seeds, they can be blended in smoothies or sprinkled on porridge, yoghurts, veggies, salads and curries.

Unlike most other seeds, they also absorb liquid to form a gel, which makes them great for thickening sauces and making sugar-free jam. Their liquid-absorbing ability has even led to the creation of chia pudding, which Kim Kardashian has helped to popularise.

These seeds are highly nutritious, being packed full of important vitamins and minerals – including antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids and fibre – that can support a healthy lifestyle and contribute to disease prevention.

What are the benefits of chia seeds?

While there isn't a great deal of research on chia seeds themselves, there is good evidence that their key nutrients can boost health and protect against illness.

1. Protection against cell damage

Chia seeds are high in antioxidants, and these molecules help to fight free radicals in your body. Free radicals are unstable atoms that crash into cells and damage them, which in turn can lead to the development of several serious health conditions, including [heart disease](#) and certain [cancers](#)¹.

2. Protection against cardiovascular disease

The omega-3 fatty acid called alpha-linoleic acid (ALA) is also abundant in chia seeds. Research suggests ALA may help to lower your risk of heart disease, [heart attack](#), [stroke](#) and related conditions².

3. Healthy blood pressure

If you have [high blood pressure](#), chia seeds and chia flour may help lower it. This is because the seeds are high in fibre and contain anti-inflammatory properties..

Remember, if you're incorporating chia seeds into your diet for your blood pressure, you need to support this with other heart healthy lifestyle changes, including an overall [heart-healthy diet](#) and [exercise routine](#).

4. Healthy cholesterol

According to one review, chia seeds have a protective effect on the balance of good (high-density lipoprotein or HDL) and bad (low-density lipoprotein or LDL) cholesterol in your blood⁴. However, no single food can effectively treat high [cholesterol](#) - the rest of your diet also needs to be tailored too this goal.

5. Healthy digestion

As they are rich in [fibre](#), chia seeds may also help regulate digestion. Just one handful (25g) of chia seeds provides 9g of fibre, fulfilling 30% of your daily recommended fibre intake⁵.

Not eating enough fibre from food can cause [constipation](#) and is linked to [irritable bowel syndrome](#) (IBS). Fibre also helps support the good bacteria in your gut, which influences your health and wellbeing [in many ways](#).

6. Diabetes management

There's emerging evidence that chia seeds may be helpful to those living with [type 2 diabetes](#), although more research is needed.

One small study found that chia seeds may slow down how quickly the liver releases glucose, effectively reducing blood sugar spikes⁶. Another concluded that chia seeds may be useful for overweight and obese people with type 2 diabetes⁷.

These powerful little seeds may also lower blood pressure in people managing type 2 diabetes, which could help with symptoms and prevent associated complications⁸.

7. Anti-inflammatory effects

Long-term inflammation in the body, when your immune system triggers internal swelling, can damage cells and cause health problems like type 2 diabetes and [cardiovascular disease](#).

[Ultra-processed](#), sugary and fatty foods can cause inflammation, but chia seeds and other anti-inflammatory foods contain antioxidants such as caffeic acid, which [fight inflammation in several ways](#).

8. Healthy bones

Chia seeds are packed with minerals that are essential for healthy bones. This includes [calcium](#), phosphorus, and [magnesium](#)⁹.

For example, compared to dairy products, chia seeds contain more calcium gram for gram - which helps keep your bones strong. Just one handful (25g) of chia seeds contains up to 168mg of calcium¹⁰.

9. Weight management

Chia seeds contain a lot of nutrients, but this doesn't automatically make them great for weight loss, despite the claims of celebrities like Taylor Swift.

In fact, there's little evidence to support the claim that eating chia seeds can support weight loss, unless you're living with type 2 diabetes and are over a healthy weight. This said, because chia seeds contain such a high concentration of fibre, they may help you feel fuller for longer - and this in itself is an effective weight loss tactic.

Are chia seeds safe?

For most people, chia seeds can be enjoyed regularly as part of a varied and balanced diet. Just be mindful that eating too many in one sitting could cause [bloating](#), constipation, and an uncomfortable stomach.

This is the result of consuming too much fibre which can slow digestion and make your poo too hard. For this reason, it's a good idea to drink plenty of water at the same time.

Allergy to chia seeds is relatively rare, compared to other nut and seed allergies. In fact, in the UK there have been only two known cases of severe allergic reaction to chia seeds, suggesting that people with other nut or seed allergies are likely to be able to eat chia seeds¹¹. However, if you have allergies, it's important to speak to your doctor first.

Who should be careful with chia seeds?

Chia seeds pack such a nutritional punch that people with certain health issues - and those taking certain medicines - may need to limit or avoid them altogether. Check with your doctor if any of the following applies to you.

- You have had a stroke, have **low blood pressure** or are taking blood thinning medicines - as the high concentration of omega-3 fatty acids may slow your blood clotting further.
- You have a gastrointestinal tract disorder, such as **Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis** or **diverticulitis** - as chia seeds contain lots of indigestible fibre.
- You are taking medicine for diabetes or high blood pressure - as chia seeds may affect how well your medicines work.

Further reading

1. [Vazhappilly et al: Role of flavonoids in thrombotic, cardiovascular, and inflammatory diseases.](#)
2. [Abdelhamind et al: Omega-3 intake for cardiovascular disease.](#)

3. Toscano et al: Chia flour supplementation reduces blood pressure in hypertensive subject.
4. Silva et al: Chia seed (*Salvia hispanica* L.) consumption and lipid profile: a systematic review and meta-analysis.
5. US Department of Agriculture: Seeds, chia seeds, dried.
6. Vuksan et al: Comparison of flax (*Linum usitatissimum*) and Salba-chia (*Salvia hispanica* L.) seeds on postprandial glycemia and satiety in healthy individuals: a randomized, controlled, crossover study.
7. Vuksan et al: Salba-chia (*Salvia hispanica* L.) in the treatment of overweight and obese patients with type 2 diabetes: A double-blind randomized controlled trial.
8. Alwosais et al: Chia seed (*Salvia hispanica* L.) supplementation to the diet of adults with type 2 diabetes improved systolic blood pressure: A randomized controlled trial.
9. Chañi et al: Long-term dietary intake of chia seed is associated with increased bone mineral content and improved hepatic and intestinal morphology in Sprague-Dawley rats.
10. Vera-Céspedes et al: Physico-chemical and nutritional properties of chia seeds from Latin American countries.
11. Allergy Resources: Chia seed allergy.

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Authored by: Amberley Davis	Peer Reviewed by: Dr Krishna Vakharia, MRCP	
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