

Ch-ch-ch CHIA!

Not just another novelty.

By: Ruby Lathon, PhD



Chia Pets were always an interesting novelty to me. As a kid, I remember singing the Chia Pet jingle with my sister, and giggling at the corniness of the jingle, “ch-ch-ch Chia!” I thought the whole idea was silly, but intriguing at the same time. I secretly wanted a chia pet to see it miraculously grow. I never did get a Chia Pet, but many years later I rediscovered the truly miraculous nature of the chia seed.

Chia seeds have recently re-emerged as rich sources of antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids, deeming them a superfood. While flax seeds have been getting lots more press, the chia seed is truly amazing. The chia seed has most of the properties of the flax seed, plus more! This tiny black, brown or white oval shaped seed has some remarkable attributes. Chia seeds are:

- Very high antioxidants (even more than blueberries). These antioxidants help cleanse the body of toxic debris.
- Very high in omega-3 (and omega-6) fatty acids (more than salmon without the toxins like mercury).
- High in dietary fiber, containing 25% fiber.
- Rich in calcium and boron, which helps assimilate calcium.
- Rich in protein, containing 20% protein.
- Very low in calories and carbohydrates.
- Hydrating – these seeds absorb large amounts of water, which help us hold onto the water longer, thereby keeping us hydrated.
- Energy booster – due to the hydrating properties and other vital nutrients, chia seeds provide a boost that keeps you energized. The Mayans and Aztecs were known to use chia seeds as an energy supplement and survival ration.
- Easily digestible – unlike flax seeds, you do not have to grind up chia seeds to allow your body to absorb and utilize them. They also have a filling effect due to their high water absorption, which aids in weight maintenance and weight loss.



Working chia seeds into your dietary regime is easy. Given their versatility, you have many options. Two of my favorite methods of consuming chia seeds are adding a

tablespoon to either my morning smoothie or to a large glass of water. When adding to water, let the seeds sit for 10 minutes and then consume. This allows the seeds to absorb the water in order to keep you hydrated longer. With its mild taste, you can sprinkle a tablespoon or two on your favorite cereals, oatmeal soups, and salads, or add it to your preferred salad dressings. Add them to hot teas and you will have a very nutritious tapioca-like “bubble” tea! You can even add them to healthy baked goods like whole grain breads, muffins, or pancakes. Chia seeds can be stored for several months without going rancid; it’s best to keep them refrigerated.

The Chi Pet has certainly stood the test of time, with new variations still popping up every day. From a semi-controversial President Obama Chia head to the latest animated movie characters, the Chia Pet has maintained a loyal following. Let’s keep the dietary chia seed a part of your healthy diet even longer and pass your healthy secret to friends and family. The next time you hear “ch-ch-ch CHIA!” it will now have a whole new healthy meaning, and should remind you to grab a bag of chia seeds at your local health food store!