

# MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

February 2016

## PLANTING THE SEEDS TO A HEALTHY HEART

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Chia seeds are showing up more and more on grocery store shelves in recent years, promoted as yet another wonderful addition to our diet. This issue of *Minute Nutrition News* in February's Heart Month will break down the facts on this "superfood" and help you plant the seeds to the healthy heart.

### WHAT ARE CHIA SEEDS?

Chia seeds (pronounced "chee-ah") are native to Mexico and Guatemala, and believe it or not, have been around since pre-Columbian times. In fact, it was one of the Aztec people's main foods. It is a whole grain that was historically used for medicinal purposes, and also ground up into flour and added into recipes and beverages. Fast forward to five centuries later, chia seeds are now promoted as the modern day superfood packed with nutrients that have the potential to help us prevent and manage chronic disease.



### THE NUTRITION BREAKDOWN

In theory, chia seeds do have the nutritional profile with high potential to improve our health. Chia seeds contain high levels of *alpha-linolenic acid (ALA)*, which is an omega-3 fatty acid found in plants. Chia seeds are also high in fibre and contain nutrients like magnesium, potassium and calcium. This paints a picture of a superfood that can help reduce cholesterol, improve blood sugars, lower blood pressure and manage our hunger and appetite.

In reality, research so far has only showed that chia seeds may help with blood pressure lowering and increasing feelings of fullness after eating chia-containing foods. With the very limited amount of research available, evidence has yet to be found on chia seeds' effect on other health factors. However, the lack of negative health effects found so far in current research makes it a relatively safe addition to our everyday diets.

### EATING CHIA SEEDS



You will find chia seeds in the grocery store in its whole and dried form. You can simply use it this way – no need to grind the seeds or cook it. You can add it into smoothies, porridge, cereal and yogurts right before serving. You can even hide it into sauces and sandwiches. There is no taste to the seeds, just a seedy texture. If you don't like this texture, you also have the option of buying ground chia seeds.

When chia seeds are added into liquids, they have the ability to absorb water and swell up into a gel-like texture. Think tapioca. You can make chia puddings this way (just like tapioca pudding) or add chia seeds into an overnight oatmeal mixture with milk. You can even buy or make your own juices with swelled up chia seeds.

# RECIPE OF THE MONTH

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## Tropical Chia Pudding

There's nothing like a tropical dessert to bring us memories of a warm sunny beach while we fight through the remaining months of winter. This chia pudding packs a nutritional punch with refreshing coconut and mango flavours. You can even make your own modifications and substitute with a fruit puree of your choice.



Serves 1 (1 serving = ½ cup)

### Ingredients:

1 ½ tbsp	white chia seeds, whole
½ cup	coconut milk
½ tbsp	honey
1/8 tsp	vanilla extract
¼ cup	frozen mango
1-2 tbsp	water
	coconut flakes, sweetened (optional)

### Directions:

1. In a bowl, stir together chia seeds, coconut milk, honey and vanilla extract. Refrigerate for one hour until mixture thickens.
2. Blend frozen mango and water together. Add more water if a thinner consistency is desired.
3. In a serving dish, transfer over the thickened chia seed mixture. Then layer on top puree mango.
4. Sprinkle coconut flakes on top before serving if desired.

### Nutrition information (per serving):

220 calories, Fat 12 g (18% DV), Carbohydrate 26 g (9% DV), Fibre 6 g (24%), Protein 4 g, Sodium 25 mg (1% DV), Sugars 17 g, Calcium 10% DV, Vitamin C 20% DV, Vitamin A 6% DV, Iron 10% DV