SUPER SEEDS

Although flax and chia seeds share some key characteristics, each one has different properties.

People can learn a valuable lesson from birds: seeds are a great source of nutrition. This is especially true of flax and chia seeds, which contain a variety of nutrients.

Two Fab Fiber Options
Fiber comes in two forms: soluble (found in most fiber supplements), which binds with liquids and helps to reduce cholesterol; and insoluble (found in plant foods), which moves through the digestive system intact. Too much insoluble fiber can cause gas and bloating. We need at least 30 grams of fiber daily. "The majority should be insoluble," says Mark Moyad, MD, MPH, author of Dr. Moyad's No BS Health Advice. Chia contains more total and insoluble fiber than flax.

Healthful Fats
Both seeds are excellent plant sources of anti-inflammatory omega-3 fats. The type of omega-3 is alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), which is converted in the human body into the key omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil: EPA and DHA. "It takes a while for levels of these to increase in blood and tissues," says Moyad. "So it's important to take plant omega-3s consistently." The total amount of omega-3 fats is usually higher in flaxseeds than in chia.

Flax and chia also contain omega-6 fats. Keep in mind that omega-6s from animal fats and processed oils are harmful, while those found in flax and chia have a therapeutic effect.

Culinary Delights
Nutrients cannot be digested from whole flaxseeds so they need to be ground. Both ground flaxseeds and flaxseed oil are quite perishable and should always be refrigerated.

Ground seeds, which have a nutty flavor, and oil can be added to smoothies, salads, or other foods, but the oil should never be heated.

Chia Seeds
Nutrients in chia are easily absorbed from whole or ground seeds and both forms have a long shelf life without refrigeration because the seeds contain antioxidants that protect against spoilage. For a more concentrated source of healthful fats, chia oil is available in capsules.

Chia seeds are tasteless, gluten free, and absorb liquid. They can be added to virtually any dish, including cereals, smoothies, salad dressings, dips, soups, sauces, and sandwiches.

How Much Do You Need?
A typical dosage is 1 to 2 tablespoons of flax or chia seeds or 1 tablespoon of flaxseed oil daily. When taking flax or chia capsules, follow product directions.

You shouldn't have any trouble finding high-quality flax and chia products. A few of our favorites: ReNew Life Ultimate Chia Life has 5 grams of fiber per serving and comes in a stay-fresh pouch; Nature's Plus Source of Life Gold Energy Shake is packed with an array of nutrients, including chia; and Garden of Life Perfect Food RAW Organic Green Super Food mixes raw superfoods with chia.
