The chia seeds are “super” because, like a super fruit, they deliver the maximum amount of nutrients with minimum calories. They have several of the same benefits as the more well-known “super seed” flax, but unlike flax seed, you don’t need to grind them to reap the health benefits. The nutritional benefits of chia include fiber, omega fatty acids, calcium, antioxidants and much more – even protein!

While the American Dietetic Association recommends 20 to 35 grams of fiber each day, unfortunately the average American only gets 12 to 15 grams. With nearly 11 grams of fiber per ounce, chia delivers 42% of your recommended daily value of fiber in a single serving. Fiber is vital for all aspects of health, and is especially key for weight loss and digestion. Fiber helps slow digestion and makes you feel fuller by soaking up fluid and expanding in your digestive tract.

Chia absorbs up to 12 times its own weight and expands to curb your appetite, so adding just an ounce or so of chia seeds to your diet can reduce caloric intake and help lower the energy density (or calories) of foods, plus double the amount of fiber you receive.

Contributing to its super-seed status, ounce for ounce, chia seeds have more omega-3 fatty acids than salmon! Chia is one of the most concentrated sources of omega-3 in any food. It also contains high amounts of omega-6. Everyone needs to consume high amounts of these essential fatty acids in their diet, because these EFAs build new cells and regulate various processes of the body, but our bodies cannot make them internally. They also support heart health and beautiful skin, hair and nails.

Chia also contains calcium; in fact, it delivers 18% of your daily value per ounce, which is three times more than skim milk. Many Americans – especially vegetarians or those who avoid dairy – are not getting enough calcium. Calcium deficiency can lead to osteoporosis, a disorder characterized by porous and fragile bones. Osteoporosis is a serious health problem for more than 10 million US adults, 80% of whom are women. Another 34 million have osteopenia, which is essentially pre-osteoporosis.

Overall, this tiny little seed packs a big nutritional punch.