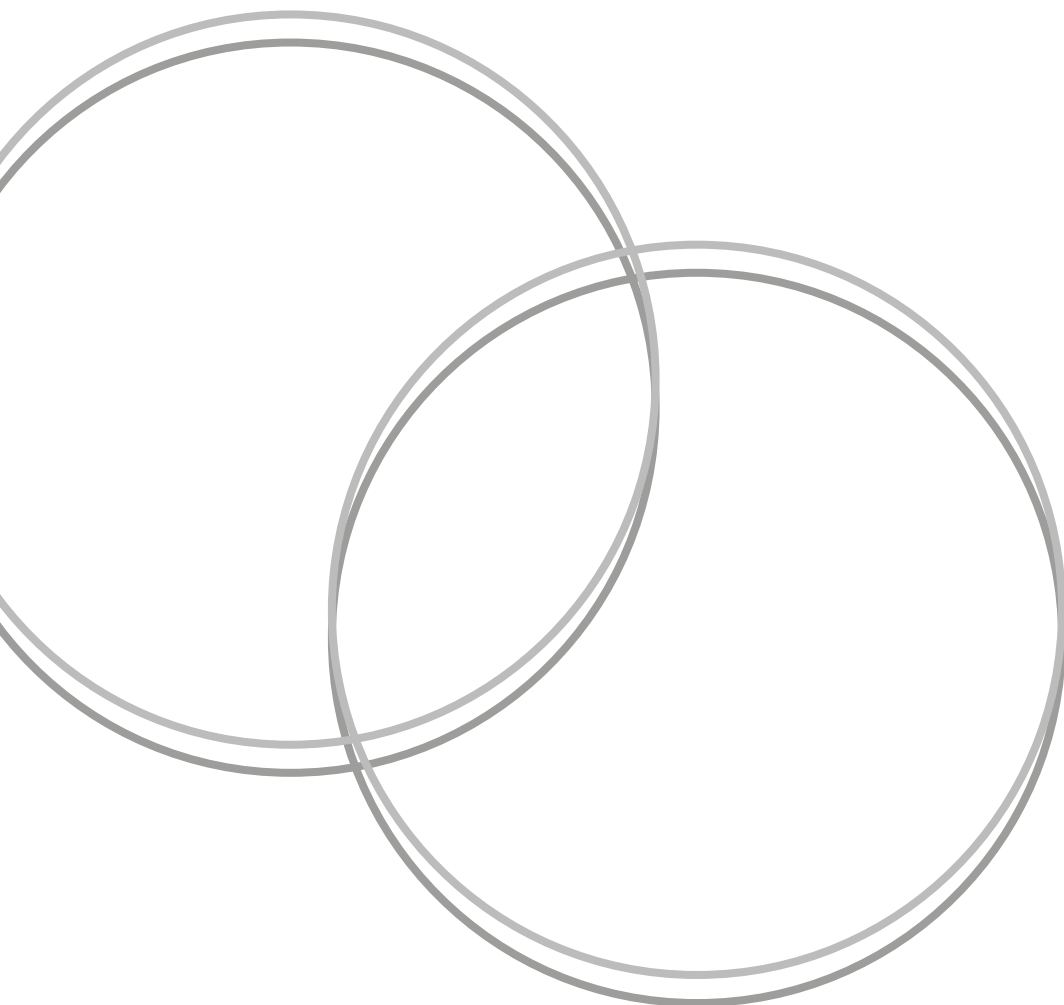


Seeds and Your Gut Health

Information for patients



Linseeds (Flaxseeds), Chia Seeds, and Psyllium are rich in fibre, which is essential for a healthy gut.

They can help with constipation, diarrhoea, and support overall digestion.

This guide explains how these seeds work and how to include them in your diet.

What are these seeds?

- **Linseeds (Flaxseeds):** Golden or brown seeds, available whole, ground (milled), or mixed with other seeds and dried fruit.
- **Chia Seeds:** Small, round, black seeds.
- **Psyllium (Ispaghula):** Seed from the Plantago Ovata plant.

How do they help?

These seeds contain soluble fibre which absorbs liquid and forms a soft gel. This can:

- Ease constipation by softening stools.
- Improve diarrhoea by regulating stool consistency and soothing the gut.
- Support gut bacteria by providing food for beneficial microbes.
- Lower LDL (“bad”) cholesterol to support heart health.
- Help stabilise blood sugar levels.

Additionally, linseeds and chia seeds (but not psyllium) contain the following nutrients that your body can absorb more easily if the seeds are soaked, crushed, or ground:

- Omega-3 fats for heart and brain health.
- Vitamin E and other nutrients beneficial for overall health.

What about other types of seeds?

Other seeds such as sunflower, pumpkin, poppy and sesame contain much less soluble fibre than linseeds, chia and psyllium so will not have the same benefits.

They do however provide other useful types of fibre and nutrients so can be included in the diet if tolerated.

Preparation Tips:

Linseeds:

- No soaking or preparation is needed. They can be eaten whole, crushed, or ground mixed into food and drinks.
- Ground/milled linseeds spoil faster than whole so are best kept refrigerated for up to 3 months.

Chia Seeds and Psyllium:

- Always mix with liquids or moist foods (e.g., chia puddings, overnight oats).
- Do not consume dry as they absorb water and expand, posing a choking risk

How much should I eat?

- Linseeds: Start with 1 teaspoon (3.5g) daily, gradually increasing to 1-2 tablespoons (10-20g) as needed.
- Chia Seeds: Start with 1 tablespoon daily, increase slowly to assess tolerance. Studies suggest that 1-3 tablespoons (12-36g) a day are enough to help with gut symptoms.
- Psyllium: Most effective at 1-2 dessert spoons (10-20g). Available in powder or capsules - follow package instructions.
- Always drink at least 150ml of fluid with each tablespoon of seeds.
- Maintain the same dose for at least one week before adjusting.
- Larger doses may be better tolerated when divided across meals.

Can I take more than one type of seed?

- Yes, try one seed at a time and build up slowly to determine level of tolerance.

Linseed Oil or Capsules?

- These contain no fibre and will not aid digestion but are a good source of omega-3 fats for heart health.

What about diverticular disease?

- There is no strong evidence that seeds need to be avoided in people with diverticular disease (when not in an active flare up).
- A high-fibre diet is recommended to prevent constipation and flare-ups.
- During active diverticulitis (a flare up), follow a low-fibre diet and avoid seeds until symptoms improve.

How can I add seeds to my diet?

- Stir linseeds into cereal, porridge, yoghurt, soups, or salads.
- Make chia seed puddings or add chia to smoothies or overnight oats.
- Mix psyllium with water, juice, or smoothies.
- Try the recipes on the following pages.

Recipes

Overnight Oats (serves one)

Ingredients:

- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 50g porridge oats
- 1tbsp linseeds or chia seeds
- 2 tbsp natural yoghurt
- 50g mixed berries
- Drizzle of honey or maple syrup
- ½ tbsp nut butter

Method:

1. Mix oats, seeds, cinnamon, pinch of salt and 100ml water or milk
2. Next day, add more liquid if needed, top with yoghurt, berries, honey, and nut butter.

Chia Seed Pudding (serves one)

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp chia seeds
- 125ml milk or milk alternative
- 2 tsp maple syrup or honey (plus extra to serve)
- Handful of fresh fruit e.g berries, banana, kiwi, mango

Method:

1. Mix chia seeds, milk and syrup or honey in a cup/jar.
Refrigerate overnight or at least 8 hours.
2. Top with fruit and drizzle with syrup before serving.

Banana Flaxseed Bars

Ingredients:

- 3 medium ripe bananas
- 150g smooth nut or seed butter
- 60-65g Ground flaxseed

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 160°C (325°F). Line an 8-inch baking tray with baking paper.
2. Mix ingredients until combined; let sit for 5 minutes to thicken.
3. Bake 16-19 minutes until firm and dry on top.

Savoury Seed Flatbread / Crackers (Chia or Flaxseed)

Makes 8–10 small crackers or 1 flatbread:

Ingredients:

- 45 g rolled oats or oat flour
- 2 tbsp (12 g) chia seeds or 2 tbsp (14–16 g) ground flaxseed
- 30 g sunflower seeds or pumpkin seeds (optional)
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp garlic powder, paprika, or herbs (optional)
- 80—120ml water (adjust to get dough consistency)
- 1–2 tsp olive oil (optional)

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F) and line a baking tray with baking paper.
2. Mix dry ingredients: In a bowl, combine oats/flour, chia or flaxseed, seeds, salt, and spices.
3. Add liquid: Pour in water and olive oil. Stir to form a thick, slightly sticky dough.
4. If using chia seeds, let the mixture sit 5–10 minutes so they gel and bind the dough.
5. Shape the dough: Spread thinly on the baking sheet ($\approx$ ¼–½ cm thick) for crackers, or shape into a small flatbread.
6. Bake:
Crackers: 15–20 min, turning halfway, until crisp and golden
Flatbread: 20–25 min until firm and lightly browned.

9. Cool & serve

10. Let cool completely for crunchier texture.

11. Serve with hummus, avocado, cheese, or as a side for soups and salads as tolerated.

Tips & Variations

- Herbs & spices: rosemary, thyme, cumin, chili flakes, or za'atar.
- Seeds mix: combine chia + flax + pumpkin/sunflower for added fibre and crunch.
- Gluten-free: use gluten free oat flour or a gluten-free flour blend.
- Make it portable: store in an airtight container for 3–4 days.

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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