

The power of chia seeds and lemon water

OSF HealthCare gastro doc weighs in on a TikTok trend

Remember the chia pet? Well chia seeds are not just for gag gifts anymore. They do have positive health benefits. For example, seeds (two tablespoons) offer an impressive 10 grams of fiber, or roughly one-third of the daily requirement for adults.

There is also a TikTok trend, made popular by celebrity wellness influencer Daryl Gioffre, which makes use of [chia seeds and fresh lemon juice](#) to jumpstart a person's digestion with a goal of alleviating constipation.

Omar Khokhar, MD, a gastroenterologist at OSF HealthCare, says the concoction is also referred to as an internal shower. To make it, combine one to two tablespoons of chia seeds with eight to 16 ounces (one to two cups) of water and lemon juice. Let it stand for at least 15 minutes, so the chia absorbs much of the water.

Dr. Khokhar says it's one way to get fiber into your diet.

"It's a very good, natural way to incorporate fiber and protein into your diet. However you want to take it [chia seeds] – a salad, as part of a parfait – there are other ways to ingest it. With this particular phenomenon, you're mixing it to sort of help it expand ahead of time outside of your body instead of inside your body."

The concoction can make you feel full and adds to hydration, which is good for digestion.

Can the drink be dangerous? Dr. Khokhar says if you're dealing with gastrointestinal (GI) disease or distress, skip the internal shower drink.

"If you have any history of esophageal swallowing issues or any history of intestinal obstruction, this is something you might want to talk to your doctor about ahead of time. Because what you don't want to do is ingest this gel-like material and cause some kind of blockage."

He also warns that if you have constipation that lasts more than just a few days, see a medical provider, particularly if you're in your 20s. Constipation can be an early sign of colon cancer.

"If you are constipated, for example, don't mask that symptom with a chia seed phenomenon that you saw on TikTok. Go see your doctor. Make sure you get checked out. And if you get checked out, then, by all means, go back to the chia phenomenon."

And start slowly. Adding too much fiber too quickly, Dr. Khokhar says, could have the opposite effect. It can cause GI symptoms such as stomach pain, gas, diarrhea, constipation and bloating.

"It can potentially cause bloating or make bloating worse, so I would be careful. If you have any kind of GI or pre-existing issue, it's something you might want to start maybe a half dose and see how you respond before going with a bigger, normal dose."

Generally speaking, Dr. Khokhar recommends also [trying to get more fiber through your diet](#). Although, after trying the drink as part of this story, Dr. Khokhar declared, "I'm not going to lie, it actually tastes pretty good."