

## Millets : Health Benefits

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### Article History

Received: 2. 01.2023

Revised: 8. 01.2023

Accepted: 13. 01.2023

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### INTRODUCTION

Millets are a group of small seeded species of cereal grains widely grown around the world and India is the world's leading producer of millet. It is a staple grain for much of the population and has been cultivated for thousands of years as early as 2700 BC in China. Millet runs as the sixth most important grain in the world and is a significant part of the diet in India, Africa, China, Japan and Egypt. Millet is also used as cattle feed in many of the developed countries. Sometimes millets are referred as a “Poor man’s Cereal” because of relative low cost, cultivation environment as well as people when given a choice prefer of the cereals such as rice and wheat. Probably, the strength of millets has not been well understood and its potential has been untapped.

Millet is a superior food source in terms of dietary fibre, minerals, phytochemicals, B-vitamin series and the starch properties, as non glutinous cereal and for its physiological action. Millets are important crops in semiarid and tropical regions of the world due to their resistance to pests and diseases, short growing season and productivity under heat and drought conditions when major cereals cannot be relied upon to provide sustainable yields. Most of the millets of the world is grown in Asia, Africa and the USSR where it is largely consumed as food (Anderson and Martin, 1949).



## Types of millet.

Millets are small-grained cereals belonging to the grass family Poaceae.

There are several different types of millets, including:

- ☞ Pearl Millet
- ☞ Little Millet
- ☞ Sorghum, or Great Millet
- ☞ Kodo
- ☞ Barnyard Mille
- ☞ Finger Millet
- ☞ Foxtail Millet
- ☞ Brown top Millet



## Nutritional facts.

Each 100 gram (g) of cooked millet contains Trusted Source the following:

- ☞ 3.51 g of protein
- ☞ 23.7 g of carbohydrate
- ☞ 1.3 g of dietary fiber
- ☞ 44 milligrams (mg) of magnesium
- ☞ 0.161 mg of copper
- ☞ 100 mg of phosphorus
- ☞ 0.272 mg of manganese

## Health Benefits.

Millet is rich in niacin, which helps your body manage more than 400 enzyme reactions. Niacin is also important for healthy skin and organ function. In fact, it's such an important compound that it's often added to processed foods to enrich them. Millet, especially the darker varieties, is also an excellent source of beta-carotene. This natural pigment acts as both an antioxidant and as a precursor to vitamin A, helping your body fight off free radicals and supporting the health of your eyes.

**Millet also provides other health benefits, including:**

### Control Blood Sugar.

Millet is low in simple carbohydrates and higher in complex carbohydrates, making it a low-glycemic index (GI) food. This means millet takes longer to digest than standard wheat flour. Low-GI foods can help keep your blood

sugar from spiking after eating, which allows people with diabetes to manage their blood sugar levels more easily.

### Improve Digestive Health

Millet is rich in dietary fiber, both soluble and insoluble. The insoluble fiber in millet is known as a “prebiotic,” which means it supports good bacteria in your digestive system. This type of fiber is also important for adding bulk to stools, which helps keep you regular and reduces your risk of colon cancer.

### Protect Your Heart

The soluble fiber in millet can help reduce the amount of “bad” cholesterol in your blood—a risk factor for atherosclerosis. Soluble fiber turns into a gel in your stomach and absorbs cholesterol, allowing it to be safely carried out of your system.

Some studies show that millet can also raise your “good” cholesterol levels and lower triglycerides. Because cholesterol is such a big risk factor for heart disease, eating millet regularly may help keep your heart healthier.

### Medicinal importance of minor millets.

India occupies the first position in major production of minor millets, but we have less aware of their importance and its nutritional property (Ahmed *et al.*, 2013).

Millets are highly nutritious and has antioxidant properties which provide balanced nutrition (Vandana Misra *et al.*, 2014). Pearl millet consists of secondary metabolites like tannins, flavonoids, terpenoidse, glycosides, phenol and steroids.

### CONCLUSION

People with diabetes may profit from adding smll millets to their diet. Minor millets, like other grains, are rich in fiber, contain important nutrients, and may help help blood glucose harpoons. Other way that can help manage their diabetes include favoring whole foods over foods containing largely reused

carbohydrates. A good dietitian can help a person plan their diet.

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