

MILLETS USEFUL ON HEALTH FOR SPORTSMAN

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Abstract:

Millets are ancient cereal crops that are naturally gluten-free and rich in fibre and antioxidants. Despite their small size, these grains are a powerhouse of nutrients, packed with essential vitamins and minerals, and have a high protein content compared to other cereals.

There are several varieties of millets, including pearl, finger, foxtail, and proso millets, each with its unique nutrient profile. For instance, pearl millets are high in iron and folic acid, making them beneficial for pregnant women. Finger millets, on the other hand, are rich in calcium, promoting bone health and development.

Introduction :

The term 'superfood' is often used to denote foods with a high nutrient-to-calorie ratio that provide numerous health benefits. Millets fit this definition perfectly due to their dense nutrient content and potential health advantages.

Millets are high in dietary fibre, promoting digestive health by preventing constipation, reducing the risk of gastric ulcers, and even offering protection against colon cancer. The high fibre content also aids in weight management by promoting feelings of satiety, thereby controlling overeating and unwanted weight gain.

What Are Millets?

Millets are coarse grains with a high nutritional value. They are rich in protein, vitamins, minerals, and fibres. Unlike other cereals, millets require little water and ground fertility. The sheer affordability of millets also tags them as 'poor man's food grain'. The world is now noticing millets for their enormous potential.

You can divide Millets into two broad categories:

1. Naked grains

Naked grains refer to the millets devoid of the tough, indigestible husk, such as Ragi, Jowar, and Bajra. These millets don't require processing after their harvest. They can be consumed right after cleaning. These millets are therefore significantly cultivated today.

2. Husked grains :

Foxtail millets, Little millets, and Kodo millets belong to this second type. These

types consist of an indigestible seed coat that has to be removed before consumption. The processing of these millets is one of the reasons for making them less popular.

Millets contain a host of micronutrients such as iron, calcium, and phosphorus. Also, they take time to digest, which doesn't cause the blood sugar spike associated with easily digestible food. So introducing millet into your diet can help control diabetes.

5 Types of Millets :

Millets come in different shapes and sizes. The two broad categories discussed above contain numerous kinds of millets. We will take a look at some of these different types below:

1. Foxtail Millet :

Foxtail millet, or indigenously called Kakum/Kangni. It contains blood sugar balancing healthy carbohydrates. The iron and calcium content present in it also helps strengthen immunity. In addition, foxtail millets help regulate your blood cholesterol and increase HDL cholesterol levels in your body.

2. Finger Millet/Ragi :

Ragi is a more common name for finger millet. It is used as a healthier cereal substitute for rice and wheat. Ragi is gluten-free and rich in protein and aids brain development in growing children.

3. Pearl Millet/Bajra :

Bajra is incredibly nutrient-dense. It contains minerals such as calcium and magnesium, protein, fibre, and iron. Practice regular consumption of pearl millet to fight against type II diabetes and aid weight loss.

4. Buckwheat :

Go for buckwheat if your primary concern is to lose weight. It makes for a healthy food option for diabetes, helps lower blood pressure, and improves cardiovascular health. Buckwheat also fights against diseases such as gallstones, childhood asthma, and breast cancer.

5. Little Millet :

Little millet is also an excellent option for those looking to lose weight. You can eat it as a rice replacement. It is high in fibre and filled with numerous minerals such as potassium, zinc, iron, and calcium. It is also packed with the health benefits of vitamin B and works as an antioxidant for your body.

The Health Benefits of Millets :

The health benefits of millets extend beyond their nutrient content. As rich sources of

antioxidants, they help fight free radicals, harmful molecules that can lead to chronic diseases and ageing. Regular consumption of millets can contribute to a reduced risk of heart disease, cancer, and type 2 diabetes. Being low-glycaemic index (GI) foods, millets release sugar slowly into the bloodstream, avoiding the sudden spike in blood sugar levels. This makes them an ideal choice for people with diabetes and those trying to manage their weight.

Some of the major health benefits of millets are as follows:

Rich in Nutrients:

Millets are a good source of several essential nutrients, including fiber, protein, B vitamins (niacin, B6, folic acid), and minerals (magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, iron, and zinc).

High in Antioxidants:

They contain various antioxidants like phenolic compounds which may help protect the body against oxidative stress.

Digestive Health:

Being high in fibre, millets aid in digestion, prevent constipation, reduce the risk of gastric Ulcers, and may even offer protection against colon cancer.

Weight Management:

The high fibre content in millets promotes feelings of fullness and can help control Overeating, making them useful for weight management.

Diabetes Management:

Millets have a low glycemic index (GI), which means they cause a slower, more controlled rise in blood sugar levels. This makes them an excellent dietary choice for managing diabetes.

Heart Health:

The fibre, potassium, and magnesium content in millets can help lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease. They can also aid in lowering LDL (bad) cholesterol levels.

Bone Health:

Some millets, like finger millet, are rich in calcium which is essential for bone health and development.

Gluten-Free:

Millets are naturally gluten-free, making them an excellent choice for people with celiac Disease or those who follow a gluten free diet.

Anaemia Prevention:

Being rich in iron, millets can help prevent anaemia.

Immunity Booster:

The antioxidants and significant nutrients in millets boost immunity, helping the body fight off infections and diseases. Remember, while millets are highly nutritious, they should be part of a balanced diet and not the only food you consume. Always strive for dietary diversity to ensure you get a wide range of nutrients needed for optimal health.

Integrating Millets into Your Diet :

With all these benefits in mind, the next step is to incorporate millets into your diet. Luckily, millets are highly versatile and can fit into virtually any meal plan. Here are some ideas:

Breakfast:

Millets can be a great addition to your morning meal. Boiled millet makes a wonderful substitute for oatmeal. Add some honey, fruits, nuts, or seeds, and you have a nutrient-packed breakfast.

Lunch and Dinner:

Millet can be used as a nutritious alternative to rice in dishes like stir-fries or pilafs. It also works well as an addition to salads for an extra crunch, or in soups to add substance and texture.

Snacks and Desserts:

You can use millet flour to bake healthier cookies, cakes, and bread. Also, popped millet can be a delicious, nutritious snack or a crunchy topping for desserts.

The Bigger Picture: Millets for Global Health :

Given the nutritional benefits and the potential role of millets in managing chronic diseases, it's clear that these tiny grains could play a significant role in global health. Countries grappling with health issues like diabetes, obesity, and heart disease could potentially benefit from promoting millets as part of a balanced diet. Furthermore, considering the resilience of millets to harsh weather conditions and their low demand for water, they stand out as a crop

that can withstand the adverse effects of climate change. For regions hit hard by changing climate patterns, promoting the cultivation of millets could be a part of the solution.

Research and Development in Millets :

Recognizing the superfood potential of millets, scientists and nutritionists across the globe are continually studying these grains for their unique benefits and uses. Research is ongoing to understand the full nutritional potential of different types of millets and to create new, improved varieties through selective breeding and modern biotechnology. This could lead to even higher nutrient content, better yield, and greater resilience to environmental stressors.

In addition, food scientists and chefs are innovating ways to incorporate millets into popular foods without compromising taste or texture. This can range from using millet flour in baking to creating new dishes that highlight the unique flavour and texture of these grains.

Summery:

Millet is an ancient grain that people have enjoyed for thousands of years. Millet is also food for livestock and birds. It is becoming increasingly popular as it is fast-growing, drought-resistant, and requires low input.

Millet is a good source of protein, fiber, key vitamins, and minerals. The potential health benefits of millet include protecting cardiovascular health, preventing the onset of diabetes, helping people achieve and maintain a healthy weight, and managing inflammation in the gut

Millet is an adaptable grain. There are many simple ways to prepare it, making it easy for people with celiac disease to include this gluten-free grain in their diets.

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