



Millets and Whole grains- the Superfoods

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So we are hearing a lot about millets and whole grains as being the new super foods- Why is that so ?

We are facing a tsunami of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, high cholesterol levels owing to today's faulty lifestyle- high consumption of simple sugars and refined foods, high stress levels, less moving and more sitting.

It is crucial we revisit our lifestyle and adopt healthy practices to enjoy a better quality life. It is time to go back to traditional eating practices and incorporate more whole foods which are less processed and refined in our diet.

As the saying goes "If you wish to enjoy a healthy and long life, do not eat what your grandmother would not recognize as food"

Whole grains and millets are good carbs because they are highly nutritious and offer many potential health benefits to the body

Millets are particularly high in minerals like iron, magnesium, phosphorous, potassium and fiber which are essential for good health especially the heart.

They are considered to be the least allergenic and most easily digestible grains available.

Since millets do not contain gluten, it is a wonderful grain alternative for people who are gluten-sensitive.

Whole Grains on the other hand may not be gluten free but are packed with nutrients They are rich in the essential vitamins and minerals which the body requires to maintain good health and prevent disease. They are high in fiber offering a higher

satiety value thus aiding in weight loss by keeping you full longer. They release sugar at a slower and consistent rate keeping you going through the day.

Is this fascination with millets and whole grains a passing fad or is it here to stay

I sincerely hope it is here to stay. We have **Indian Institute of Millets Research** in Hyderabad doing extensive research on millets. There are also many restaurants moving towards providing healthy options by introducing millets and whole grains as a part of their menu.

How often should millets and wholegrains be included in our diet or in other words what is the thumb rule when it comes to millets and whole grains

The amount of whole grains and millets you need depends on your daily caloric requirement. The calorie intake should be higher for a person who does manual work compared to a person who has a sedentary lifestyle. The caloric intake depends on your activity level and age, hence the proportion of millet and wholegrain intake would also differ individual to individual. Choosing from the variety of grain and millet options helps ensure that you get the right amounts of all the good nutrients and fiber required to maintain good health.

Can you tell us some grains and millets that are better - especially for those who can't include all

These are some of the must include grains and millets in the diet offering myriad health benefits

Pearl Millet commonly known as **Bajra** in India is rich in essential nutrients like protein, fibre, phosphorous, magnesium and iron. High in fiber, it helps regulate bowel movements. Usually recommended for consumption in the winters to keep you warm.

Sorghum also called **Jowar** is a wonder grain being a good source of phosphorus, calcium, protein and fibre. The presence of iron and copper helps regulate proper blood circulation, which fuels cell growth, hair repair and enhances overall functioning of the body.

Jowar helps to regulate bowel movements, boosts metabolism and is easy on the stomach owing to its rich fibre content. It is also rich in antioxidants offering heart protective benefits.

Finger millet or Ragi/Nachni is a powerhouse of nutrients being a rich source of calcium, potassium as well as iron.

It is gluten-free, low in fat and is thus easy to digest. Perfect meal for each age group- from paediatrics to geriatrics. Used widely as a baby food. People in South have steamed ragi balls as their starch source for lunch and dinner. It can be sprouted and consumed as sprouting increases the nutritional content and also makes them easy to digest.

Foxtail millet is rich in dietary fibre, protein and low in fat. It is extremely beneficial in managing blood glucose levels as it is a good source of magnesium. The incidence of diabetes is seen to be rare among the population which consumes a foxtail millet diet.

Kodomillet is high in fibre, and contains the important mineral copper, deficiency of which impairs sugar tolerance. Research has identified anti-diabetic compounds i.e. **Quercetin** and **Phenolic** acids which are present in kodo millet

Little millet (sama rice) is eaten during fasting. It is gluten free, high in protein and dietary fiber. Excellent to keep cholesterol levels in check and aids in weight loss

Quinoa is considered a good source of protein among all the grains as it has all the essential amino acids. It is gluten free, rich in fiber, iron, magnesium etc and can be easily incorporated in salads and stir fry

Barley has a fiber called betaglucan similar to oats which helps to keep blood sugars and cholesterol in check. It is also becoming very popular in the west due to its benefits in weight loss, blood sugar and cholesterol control. It is not gluten free and is not recommended for people with celiac disease. It can be added to soups and salads.

Include these healthy friendly carbs in your diet for a healthier, fitter, alert and energetic YOU

