

Consuming millets can reduce risk of developing cardiovascular disease

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A finger millet plant. This millet is widely cultivated and goes by many names in Africa while it is popularly known as Ragi in India. Credit: Srujan Punna, ICRISAT

The consumption of millets can reduce total cholesterol, triacylglycerols (commonly known as triglycerides) and BMI according to a new study that analyzed the data of 19 studies with nearly 900 people. The latest study was undertaken by five organizations and led by International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT).

The results, published in *Frontiers in Nutrition*, bring critically needed scientific backing to the efforts to popularize and return millets to diets, especially as staples, to combat the growing prevalence of obesity and being overweight in children, adolescents and adults.

The study showed that consuming millets reduced total [cholesterol](#) by 8%, lowering it from high to [normal levels](#) in the people studied. There was nearly a 10% decrease in low- and very [low-density lipoprotein cholesterol](#) (commonly viewed as 'bad cholesterol') and triacylglycerol levels in [blood](#). Through these reductions, the levels went from above-normal to normal range. In addition, consuming millets decreased [blood pressure](#) with the [diastolic blood pressure](#) decreasing by 5%.

Dr. S Anitha, the study's lead author and Senior Nutritionist at ICRISAT, explained, "We were very surprised by the number of studies that had already been undertaken on the impact of millets on elements that impact cardiovascular diseases. This is the very first time anyone has collated all these studies and analyzed their data to test the significance of the impact. We used a meta-analysis, and results came out very

strongly to show significant positive impact on risk factors for cardiovascular disease."

The study also showed that consuming millets reduced BMI by 7% in people who were overweight and obese (from 28.5 ± 2.4 to 26.7 ± 1.8 kg/m²), showing the possibility of returning to a normal BMI (

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