



# Finger Millet (Ragi) - Small seeds with bigger health benefits

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Finger Millet, also known as Ragi is an important millet grown extensively in various regions of India and Africa. Its scientific name is *Eleusine coracana*. It ranks sixth in production after wheat, rice, maize, sorghum and bajra in India. In India, ragi (finger millet) is mostly grown and consumed in Karnataka, and to a limited extent in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Goa.

It has different names in local languages. In India finger millet is commonly called by various names like ragi (in Kannada, Telugu and Hindi), also Mandua/Mangal in Hindi, Kodra (Himachal Pradesh), Mandia (Oriya), Taidalu (in Telangana region), Kezhvaragu in Tamil etc.

## Nutritive value of Ragi

Finger millet is considered one of the most nutritious cereals. Finger millet contains about 5–8% protein, 1–2% ether extractives, 65–75% carbohydrates, 15–20% dietary fiber and 2.5–3.5% minerals. Of all the cereals and millets, finger millet has the highest amount of calcium (344mg%) and potassium (408mg%). The cereal has low fat content (1.3%) and contains mainly unsaturated fat. 100 grams of Finger millet has roughly on an average of 336 KCal of energy in them.

However, the millet also contains phytates (0.48%), polyphenols, tannins (0.61%), trypsin inhibitory factors, and dietary fiber, which were once considered as “anti nutrients” due to their metal chelating and enzyme inhibition activities (Thompson 1993) but nowadays they are termed as neutraceuticals.

Being non-glutinous, finger millet is safe for people suffering from gluten allergy and celiac disease. It is non-acid forming, and hence easy to digest. Finger millet is rich in amino acids (Tryptophan, Threonine, Valine, Isoleucine and Methionine).

## Health benefits of finger millet (ragi)

- Finger millet is an excellent source of natural calcium which helps in strengthening bones for growing children and aging people. Regular consumption of finger millet is good for bone health and keeps diseases such as osteoporosis at bay and could reduce risk of fracture.
- It is now established that phytates, polyphenols and tannins can contribute to antioxidant activity of the millet foods, which is an important factor in health, aging and metabolic diseases.
- Finger millet's phytochemicals help in slowing digestion process. This helps in controlling blood sugar level in condition of diabetes. It has been found that finger millet based diet helps diabetics as it contains higher fibre than rice and wheat. Also, the study found that diet based on whole finger millet has lower glycemic response i.e. lower ability to increase blood sugar level. This is due to presence of factors in finger millet flour which lower digestibility and absorption of starch.
- Because of its high nutritional content ragi flour is recommended as a weaning food especially in the southern parts of India.
- Finger millet is a very good source of natural Iron and its consumption helps in recovery of Anemia. The Ragi based foods are highly suited for expectant mothers and elderly due to their high calcium and iron content.
- Finger millet consumption helps in relaxing body naturally. It is beneficial in conditions of anxiety, depression and insomnia. It is also useful for migraines.
- Green ragi (finger millet) is recommended for conditions of blood pressure, liver disorders, asthma and heart weakness. Green ragi is also recommended to lactating mothers in condition of lack of milk production.
- If consumed regularly, finger millet could help in keeping malnutrition, degenerative diseases and premature aging at bay.

So, finger millet is an extremely nutritious cereal and is very beneficial for maintaining a good health. Therefore have received attention for their potential role as functional foods. However, its high intake could increase quantity oxalic acid in the body. Therefore, it is not advised to patients having kidney stones (Urinary Calculi). Finger millet could be enjoyed in different forms and preparations. ragi roti, ragi dosa, ragi porridge, ragi upma, ragi cakes, ragi biscuits are few popular dishes of finger millet (ragi).

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Source: <https://data.vikaspedia.in/short/lc?k=84bJCruvsGdbexkV5FIFHg>

