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# Goji Berry in Health and Wellness: A Review of Its Nutritional and Medicinal Uses

Gunjan Sahu[1], Sonam Yadav[1], Kiran Patel[1], Poonam[1], Shobha Sahu[2*],Dr. Gyanesh Kumar Sahu[2],Dr. Rajesh Kumar Nema[3]

[1]Rungta Institute of Pharmaceutical Science & Research, kohka, kurud, bhilai,

[2]Rungta Institute of Pharmaceutical Science, kohka, kurud, bhilai,

## ABSTRACT

Goji berries (Lycium barbarum and Lycium chinense), also known as wolfberries, have been used in traditional Chinese medicine for centuries. These nutrient-dense berries, rich in dietary fiber, vitamins, minerals, and bioactive compounds like polysaccharides, carotenoids, and phenolics, exhibit numerous health benefits. Renowned for their antioxidant properties, goji berries contribute to anti-aging, improved vision, immune enhancement, and potential protection against hypertension, diabetes, and cancer. They are widely consumed as dried fruits, teas, juices, and functional ingredients in diverse food products, enhancing their sensory and nutritional profiles. In addition to their culinary applications, goji berries hold promise in pharmaceutical and skincare industries. Incorporating goji extracts in milk, meat, bakery, and confectionery products enhances their antioxidant capacity and sensory attributes. Future prospects focus on advancing agricultural methods, expanding global acceptance, and substantiating health claims through clinical research. Goji berries, celebrated as a superfood, continue to gain prominence as functional ingredients for health and wellness.

**KEYWORDS**: Goji berries, antioxidants, health benefits, bioactive compounds, polysaccharides,carotenoids.

## INTRODUCTION

China and other Asian nations have long utilized goji, also known as wolfberry, as a traditional medicinal food. They belong to the Solanaceae family of tomato-nightshades and are highly hard, spiky, and shrubby plants. The most popular colloquial term for goji berries is "wolfberry," which is derived from the word "gou," which means "wolf." The term "goji" is derived from several indigenous terms.

China is the birthplace of goji plants, which are cultivated from the subtropical regions in the south to the arid, frigid regions of Inner Mongolia. The majority of commercial fruit production occurs in the vicinity of Inner Mongolia. The fruits have a green calyx close to the stem and are crimson like tomatoes. Like tomato seeds, the seeds are tiny and delicious. The purple hue of flowers eventually turns to yellow. The goji berry is a member of the Magnoliophyte division, Magnoliopsida class, Solanine order, Solanaceae family, and Lycium genus. The fruits of two closely related species, Lycium barbarum and Lycium Chinese, are commonly referred to as goji berries or wolf berries.

In order to create a variety of nutritious food recipes that improve the dish's flavour, look, texture, and most importantly health, Chinese people frequently include numerous TCM herbs in their diet.

Because berry fruits are abounding in extremely valuable bioactive chemicals that may have a good impact on human health, they are widely consumed across the world. Berries are rich in dietary fiber, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals like carotenoids and phenolic compounds that have anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and other health-promoting properties. Berries are utilized as ingredients in various culinary products and dietary supplements, and they can be eaten fresh, frozen, or dried. Berries are frequently marketed as superfruits and functional meals to highlight

their exceptional health advantages. Goji berries are becoming increasingly popular among exotic berry fruits in various nations, both for their potential use in the food business and from a medicinal and pharmaceutical perspective.

## NUTRITIONAL VALUE OF GOJI BERRIES

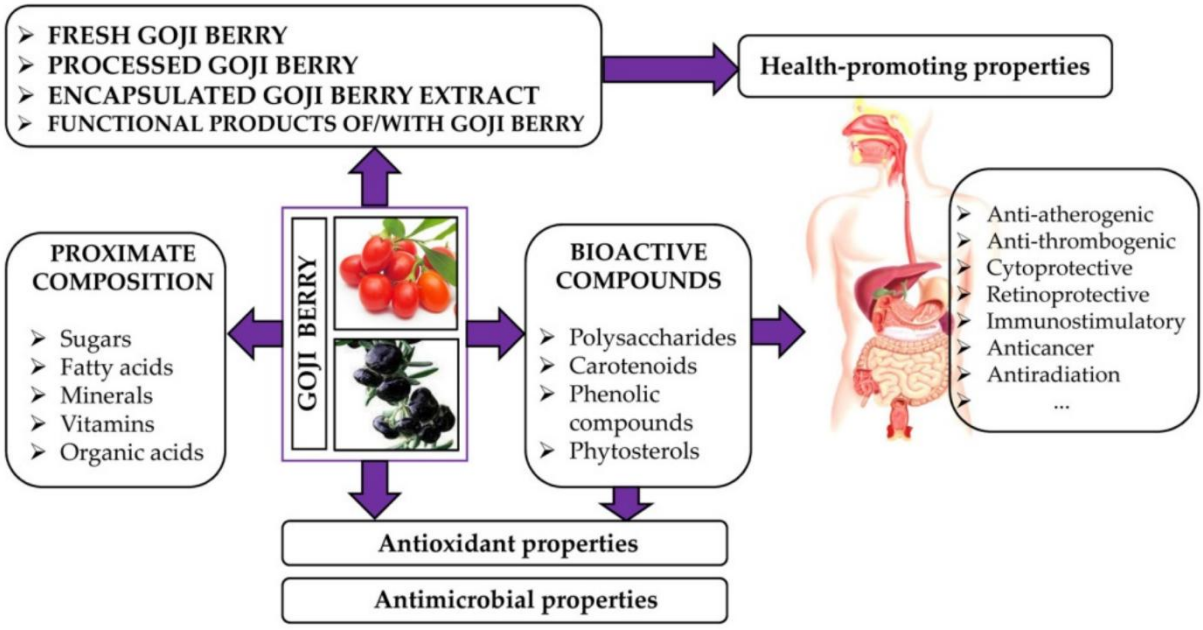
Goji berries are highly appealing to consumers due to their distinct colors, which range from yellow and red (L. barbarum) to black (L. ruthenicum), as well as their unique blend of sweet, acidic, and pungent flavors. The acceptable sensory qualities of both raw and dried goji berries, as well as the refreshing nature of various food products enhanced with them, are caused by the balanced quantity of sugars (fructose, glucose, and sucrose), organic acids, and certain secondary metabolites.

In terms of nutrition, goji berries are a good source of vitamin C, dietary fiber, and a few minerals, such as potassium, copper, manganese, iron, and zinc. Furthermore, L. barbarum fruit microelements show a high bioaccessibility.

## BIOACTIVE COMPOUNDS OF GOJI BERRIES

Goji berries include a variety of bioactive substances that are notable for their strong antioxidant capacity. Goji berries are a good source of 46% carbohydrates, 16% dietary fiber, 13% protein, and 1.5% fat. Goji berries may therefore be a great provider of macronutrients. Goji berries also include micronutrients, such as vitamins and minerals. Studies have shown that goji berries include minerals like copper, manganese, magnesium, and selenium, as well as riboflavin, thiamine, and nicotinic acid. The macronutrients and micronutrients of goji berries have been used to assess the bioactive substances that provide health benefits. Polysaccharides, carotenoids, and phenolics are the components of goji berries with the highest biological activity. These useful elements are connected to goji berry health-promoting qualities.

Polysaccharides are the most significant class of chemicals found in goji berries. Polysaccharides, which are found in the water-soluble form of highly branched L. barbarum polysaccharides, make up 5–8% of dried fruits.

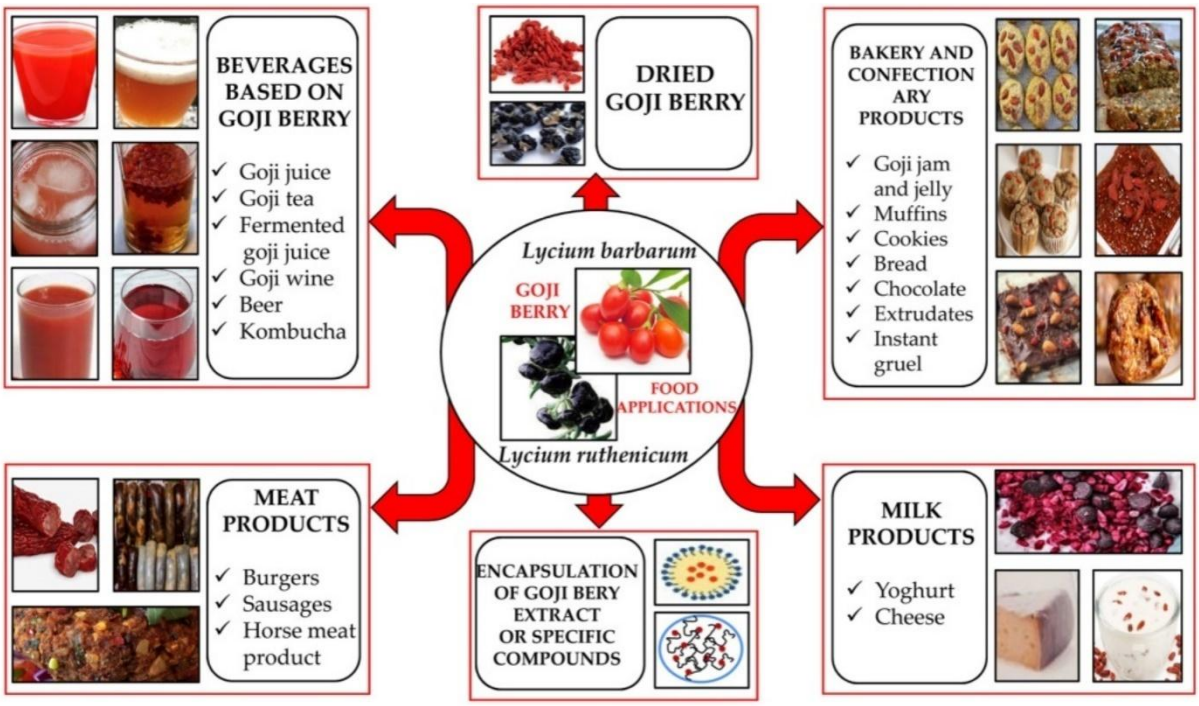


## PHARMACOLOGICAL PROPERTIES OF GOJI BERRIES

The public's recognition of goji berries as a "superfood" with significant nutritional and antioxidant benefits has led to its rise in popularity throughout time. A "nutrient-rich" meal that is thought to be particularly advantageous for health or wellbeing is called a superfood. Goji berries' carotenoid concentration has garnered a lot of interest because of its positive effects on eyesight, retinopathy, and macular degeneration, including antioxidant properties. For example, goji berry polysaccharides have long been used as a tonic food and in traditional Chinese medicine. Lycium barbarum polysaccharides (LBPs) are among the most valuable functional components in relation to its health benefits. L. barbarum has been utilized as a health dietary supplement in China and around the world in recent years. It comes in a variety of forms, including juice and also tea. Products derived from L. barbarum may aid to boost immunity, increase fertility, and lower blood lipid levels.

## GOJI BERRY AS SOURCE OF FUNCTIONAL INGREDIENTS IN DIFFERENT FOOD PRODUCTS

Due to their nutritional, health-promoting, and sensory qualities, goji berries are increasingly being utilized as a raw ingredient in the creation of particular beverages or added to a variety of culinary items, including baked goods, confections, meat products, and milk products.




1. Goji Berry as a Raw Material or a Functional Ingredient in the Production of Beverages

Additionally, goji berries were employed as a functional element at various points during the amber ale beer production process. In addition to having good antioxidant capacity, beer containing goji berries showed higher levels of total phenolics, AA-2βG, and a few particular phenolic components (rutin, p-coumaric, and ferulic acid). The distinct flavors and odors of these beers—such as red fruit, honey, caramel, coffee, hay, smoke, and a well-balanced ratio of sourness to bitterness—also contributed to their good sensory acceptability.
Lastly, a lot of food products can use black goji extract as a natural color and useful ingredient. The primary constituents of this extract are petunidin derivatives, mainly the cis and trans isomers of petunidin-3-p-coumaroyl-rutinoside-5-O-glucoside, which are in charge of color stability throughout a broad pH range as well as color retention

and enhancement intensity.

2. Goji Berries as Functional Ingredients in Confectionery and Bakery Products

Sweet items made from goji berries, like jam or jelly, scored highly for color, consistency, flavor, and sweetness and had good antioxidant potential. Nevertheless, the sourness and aftertaste sensory scores of these goods were lower. On the other hand, varying amounts of goji berries can be added to different baking and confectionery goods to enhance their texture, flavor, or functionality. For instance, rice extrudates and quick gruels that contained a growing amount of dry goji berries had stronger antioxidant qualities and higher levels of rutin, zeaxanthin Di palmitate, AA-2βG, and total phenolics as well as several specific phenolic acids.

Furthermore, muffins and cookies enhanced with varying proportions of goji berry powder or by-products showed higher levels of soluble, insoluble, and total phenolic fiber as well as favorable sensory characteristics (sourness, little sweetness, and distinct flavor). They used the Maillard process to darken the extrudates' color.juiciness, flavor, and general appeal.

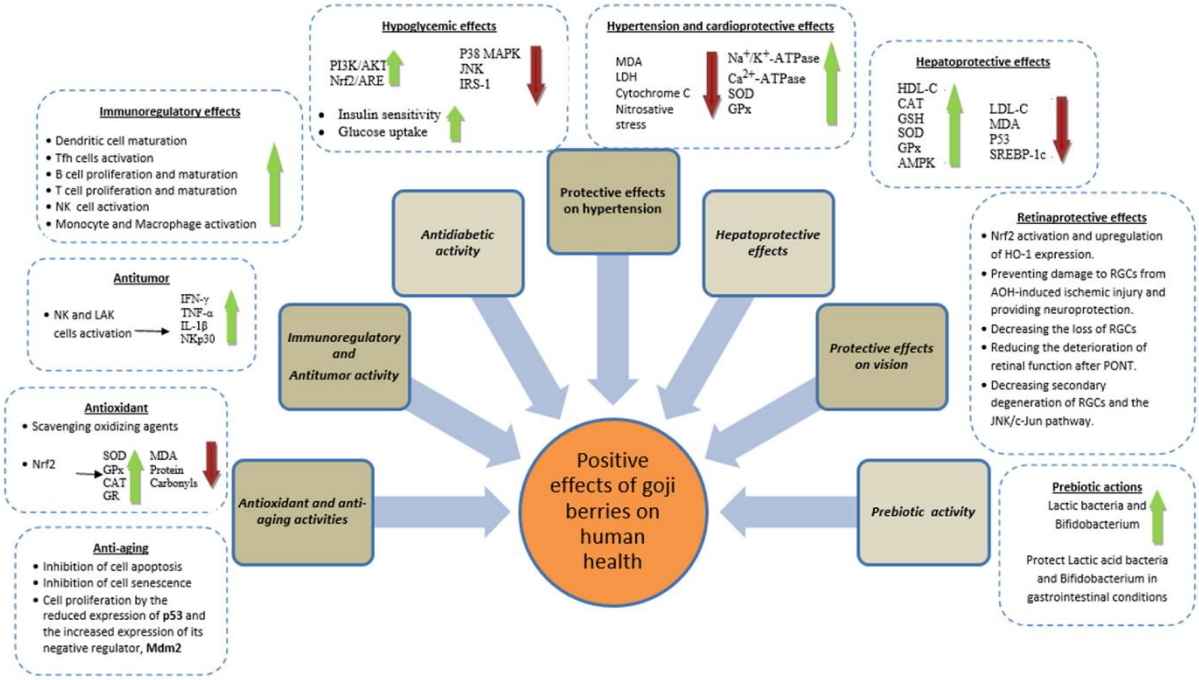
4. Goji Berries as Functional Ingredients in Milk Products

Enhancing the TPC and antioxidant properties of milk products like probiotic yogurt and cheese can be achieved by adding goji berries or extract. Additionally, goji berries increased the lactic acid bacteria's viability in yoghurt while it was being stored. Additionally, cheese containing goji extracts demonstrated less angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitory activity. But cheese enhanced with fish collagen or goji extract had the highest.The formation of peptides that may have anti-ACE properties after the 14th and 28th days of storage.

## GOJI BERRIES USE OF BIOACTIVITIES IN HEALTH

### 1. Antioxidant Activity

Antioxidant properties of goji berries have been suggested to counteract the oxidative action of free radicals and activate antioxidant mechanisms, including increased expression of several antioxidant and cytoprotective enzymes such as erythroid-derived 2-like 2 (Nrf2), glutathione (GSH), glutathione peroxidase (GPx), catalase (CAT), and superoxide dismutase (SOD) . As a result, peroxide anion radicals were shown to attach to L. barbarum extracts, which subsequently decreased their activity.s



2**. Antiaging Activity**

While a clinical study shows that consuming 500 mg of L. barbarum over 10 days can significantly lower plasma triglyceride levels and raise levels of cyclic adenosine monophosphate (cAMP) and SOD, all of the prior research supports the positive anti-aging effectsofLBP.
L. barbarum's anti-aging properties are thought to be able to shield cells against oxidative, hyperglycemic, and hyperlipidemic situations because they show up in a variety of target organs. A prior clinical research in rabbits treated with alloxan showed that the LBP group decreased blood glucose levels.

According to the philosophy of traditional Chinese medicine, controlling the function of a basic organ, such the liver or kidneys, leads to controlling other organs or even the body as a whole. According to this view, traditional Chinese medicine advises using and consuming fruits of the L. barbarum plant to treat aging-related illnesses because they appear to have a variety of beneficial effects that lower all risk factors for these conditions.

3**. Hypertension and Heart Protective Effects**

due to its great prevalence, role in cardiovascular disease, and association with several health issues that can result in death, hypertension is currently one of the most significant public health issues. In the United States alone, hypertension affects around 103 million individuals, or nearly one in two adults. Genetics, inactivity, and sodium intake in the diet are some of the elements that cause hypertension, which is one of the most prevalent causes of the condition. Blood pressure sensitivity to salt has been confirmed by reports of an interaction between blood pressure and dietary sodium intake.

4**. Eye and Vision Activity**

Chinese herbalists have suggested that goji berries have beneficial effects on eye conditions like glaucoma, cataracts, and rhinitis pigmentosa (RP) because of their high zeaxanthin and its esters, which are readily absorbed into serum and protect the retina from blue light damage and free radicals.

5. **Antidiabetic Activity**

Several research investigations have looked into the impact of goji berry extracts' antidiabetic properties. Blood glucose regulation may benefit from goji berries. Additionally, in a finished study.When goji berry extract was given to type 2 diabetic mice for four weeks, their blood glucose levels dropped by 35%

6**. Anticancer, Antitumour**

Because of its high phytochemical and antioxidant makeup, goji berries have long been used in traditional Chinese medicine to stop the development and spread of cancer. Compared to other foods, certain of its components may have a more effective therapeutic effect on cancer. HT-29 cancer cells were more effectively inhibited by the L. Barba rum carotenoid nano emulsion than by the carotenoid extract. Additionally, the nano emulsion and extract had the ability to arrest the cell cycle at G2/M, downregulate CDK1, CDK2, cyclin A, and cyclin B, and upregulate p53 and p21 expression. Furthermore, the majority of the biological effects of goji berries, such as their antitumor, anticancer, and immunomodulatory qualities, are attributed to their abnormally high content of water-soluble peptide-conjugated polysaccharides, or LBPs.

7.**Immunoregulatory Activity**

The immune system is another name for vertebrates' defense mechanisms. Through a process called an immunological response, the immune system identifies and eliminates harmful compounds and foreign invaders. An antigen is the molecule that triggers the immunological response. Furthermore, these processes aid the body's attempts to eliminate

aging or damaged cells and cancerous cells, while occasionally they harm the organism's own tissues.

***8.*** **Hepatoprotective Activity**

After smoking and high blood pressure, alcohol use is the third most important risk factor causing the worldwide burden of illness. According to a WHO research released in September 2018, alcohol is responsible for 5.3% of all deaths worldwide and causes 3 million deaths annually. Demori and Voci noted that contemporary eating habits with high-calorie meals that result in obesity can also cause liver illnesses such hepatic steatosis, despite the three causes described above that influence the liver.

**Food Products**

1. Dried Goji Berries: Eaten as snacks or added to cereals, salads, or baked goods.

2. Goji Berry Juices: Pure or blended with other fruits for a health drink.

3. Goji Berry Tea: Made from dried berries or extracts for a refreshing herbal tea.

4. Energy Bars: Incorporated as an ingredient in granola or protein bars.

5. Smoothie Mixes: Freeze-dried goji berry powders or blends for smoothies.

6. Chocolate with Goji Berries: Dark or milk chocolate bars infused with goji berries.

Dietary Supplements

1. Capsules: Containing goji berry extract, often for their antioxidant benefits.

2. Powders: Freeze-dried goji berry powder for mixing with drinks or recipes.

3. Multivitamins: Sometimes combined with other superfoods like acai or turmeric.

Skincare and Beauty Products

1. Face Creams and Serums: Leveraging goji's anti-aging and moisturizing properties.

2. Hair Products: Shampoos and conditioners for nourishing the scalp.

3. Lip Balms and Masks: Goji extracts to hydrate and protect lips.

Specialty Products

1. Goji Berry Wine: Fermented goji berries for a unique beverage.

2. Pet Food: Some premium pet foods include goji berries for added nutrition.

**FUTURE PROSPECTS**

1. Functional Foods and Beverages:Goji berries are increasingly being incorporated into health-focused products like teas, smoothies, and energy bars.

2. Pharmaceutical Applications:Research is ongoing into isolating specific compounds like LBPs for use in targeted thepies.

3. Agricultural Advances:Improved cultivation methods and genetic studies are being explored to enhance yield, nutrient content, and resilience to environmental stress.

4. Global Acceptance:Further studies on safety, dosage, and bioavailability will help integrate goji berries into mainstream dietary recommendations.

5. Clinical Research:Large-scale human trials are needed to substantiate claims and investigate new medicinal applications.

## CONCLUSION

Goji berries serve as a versatile superfood with significant health benefits, spanning from antioxidant and anti-aging properties to potential roles in managing chronic diseases. Their applications in food, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics underscore their global significance. As research advances, goji berries are poised to become integral to health-focused diets and medical formulations, supported by deeper insights into their bioactivities and clinical efficacy.

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