

Why more Indians are struggling with gut sensitivities

Aditi Malhotra

For a country known for its rich culinary diversity, the rising wave of food intolerance among Indians is both surprising and concerning. From gluten and dairy to specific fruits, seeds, and spices, more people are reporting discomfort, digestive trouble, and unexplained fatigue after eating certain foods. Once dismissed as rare or misunderstood, food intolerance is now entering everyday conversations, restaurant menus, and medical consultations. And it is not just an urban trend—it is a genuine health concern that reflects deeper changes in lifestyle, environment, and awareness.



Food intolerance is different from a food allergy. It does not cause an immediate immune system response, but it can create chronic discomfort over time. Symptoms like bloating, gas, stomach cramps, fatigue, brain fog, and skin issues often go unnoticed or misdiagnosed. Because these symptoms are vague and develop gradually, many people suffer for years without connecting them to what they are eating.

THE CASE OF GLUTEN AND DAIRY
Among the most commonly reported intolerances in India are gluten and lactose. Wheat, once consumed in smaller quantities and milder forms, is now present in highly processed ways in everything from breads and biscuits to pastas and ready meals. The wheat we consume today also contains higher levels of gluten compared to traditional varieties, making it harder for some people to digest.

Lactose intolerance, while often brushed aside, is surprisingly common among Indian adults. As children, many digest milk easily, but as we grow older, the enzyme required to break down lactose starts to decrease. This can lead to gas, bloating, and stomach upset after consuming milk, cheese, or ice cream. Unfortunately, because dairy is such a cultural staple, many continue to consume it without realising the toll it may be taking on their health.

LOOKING AHEAD

Food intolerance is not just a trend, it is a reflection of how modern life is clashing with traditional digestive wisdom. While our ancestors intuitively ate local, seasonal, and balanced meals, we now live in a fast-paced world where convenience often outweighs nourishment. Understanding and respecting your gut's unique needs is one of the most empowering steps you can take toward better health. If your body is sending signals of discomfort, fatigue, or imbalance, do not ignore them. Sometimes, healing begins not with medication, but with the simple act of paying attention to what is on your plate.



HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE INTOLERANT

One of the trickiest things about food intolerance is identifying it. There is no single blood test that can definitively tell you what you are reacting to. The most effective approach remains the elimination diet, where you temporarily remove suspected foods from your diet and slowly reintroduce them while observing symptoms. Keeping a food diary is also a useful tool. By tracking what you eat and how you feel afterwards, patterns start to emerge. If you consistently feel sluggish after lunch or bloated every time you eat paneer, that is a sign worth

investigating. Consulting with a functional nutritionist or a gastroenterologist can provide further clarity.

THE SHIFT TOWARD GUT-FRIENDLY LIVING

The good news is that awareness around gut health is growing. More Indians are now experimenting with gluten-free flours like jowar, bajra, and ragi. Plant-based milks made from almond, oat, and coconut are gaining popularity. Fermented foods like kanji, pickles, kombucha, and sauerkraut are also making a comeback for their probiotic benefits. Restaurants and cafes are beginning to offer allergen-free menus, and grocery stores are stocking products that are organic, preservative-free, and gut-friendly. But beyond swapping ingredients, the real change lies in listening to your body. Eating slowly, chewing thoroughly, reducing stress, getting enough sleep, and giving your gut time to rest between meals are all important lifestyle habits. Because even the healthiest food can cause discomfort if your body is not in a state to receive it well.

THE BOND WITH THE BANYAN TREE



Govind S Poteker

Amidst the first full moon of the monsoon, women celebrated Vat Pournima with devotion and dedication. While the Strawberry Moon played hide and seek behind monsoon clouds, which acted as the spoil sport, there were still vibrant hues around village Banyan shrines. Women, adorned in sarees of myriad colors, kept their annual date with the sacred Banyan tree.

Savitris across the state of Goa prayed and undertook a vrat (fast) for their Satyawon on the occasion of Vat Savitri Pooja. It is a significant day in the lives of married women, as they visit the nearest Banyan shrines in their villages to offer prayers for the health and long life of their husbands. According to the legendary mythological tale, Princess Savitri managed to convince Lord Yama, the God of Death, to restore her husband to life. The Banyan tree is considered the abode of the Hindu Trinity.

The day began early as women, clad in traditional Nav Vari sarees (mostly green), performed the pooja by circumambulating the Banyan tree to strengthen the marital bond. At Shree Balika Banai Prasann in Char Manas, Salvador do Mundo, it was a day of celebration, as women from nearby villages lined up to offer prayers.

One of the villagers, Nadisha Umesh Pednekar who is offering pooja for the last 20 years at this place following the ancient tradition said, "It is a day of fasting. No cooked food is consumed, only fruits are eaten. During the pooja, seven to twenty-one circumambulations of the Banyan plant are performed, with a white sacred



thread tied around it. A woman, remembering the sacrifice of Princess Savitri, prays to God, seeking blessings to be united with the same life partner for seven generations."

Dhono, a small basket made from Banyan leaves, is used to offer five types of fruits and raw green gram to the deity. The fruits usually include mango, jackfruit, pineapple, jamun, and other seasonal varieties.

After pooja, pleasantries are exchanged by applying Haldi-Kumkum and Dhono is gifted to everyone present, Nadisha noted. Some women wait for the auspicious time to perform pooja, while working women often complete the ritual early in the day.

Women continue to follow the epic story of Princess Savitri with great reverence. Amid the festive atmosphere, the celebration not only reinforces marital bonds but also renews our connection with nature and its well-being, as we cherish and sustain cultural traditions.

Goans should expand their fish palate: Marine conservationist Aaron Lobo

Much of the fish produce marketed as 'fresh' in Goa today is neither fresh, local, nor wild, according to marine conservationist, Dr Aaron Savio Lobo, who at a recent MOG Sundays talk at the Museum of Goa in Pilerne, also urged Goans to look beyond the ubiquitous snapper, chonak and kingfish varieties to enhance nutrition in their staple thali.

In his talk, 'It's Raining Fish - Hallelujah!' Dr Aaron also said that overfishing in the seas off Goa was reducing the 'catch-per-effort' ratio in the state, calling for a cap on the number of fishing vessels going out to sea. "The catch-per-effort is declining. We don't understand how much fish is in the sea. The issue is too many boats chasing too few fish, which need to be regulated by limiting the number of vessels going out to sea."

During the monsoon fishing ban, the Margao Wholesale Fish Market continues to offer seafood varieties like saundale (false trevally) and isvan (kingfish). Dr Aaron revealed that many of these, including popular options like chonak, are farmed in other states and brought into Goa.

The marine conservationist said that there had been an erosion of fish diversity in Goa's local diet due to class perceptions,

tourism demands and market homogeneity. Bland, mass-produced varieties are replacing many nutritious species. "Some may look odd, but are perfectly delicious, diverse, and healthy, like the tambde balle or the red eel. It makes for a very delicious ambotik curry," says Dr Aaron. "Locals should go beyond the usual snapper, chonak and kingfish."

India is now the third largest seafood producer globally, yet it ranks only sixth in wild capture fisheries, Dr Aaron said, adding, that while aquaculture has seen a gain in momentum, wild fish remain nutritionally superior, rich in essential micronutrients like selenium, calcium and omega-3s, nutrients, that are often deficient in farmed fish. Dr Aaron also highlighted the rich productivity of coastal ecosystems during the monsoons, like estuaries that are fed by nutrient-rich plumes, creating a spawning ground for diverse marine life. Mudflats and mangroves are important for fish to breed and grow, he said, adding that areas like the Chapora river mouth are vital nurseries. Traditionally, Goans relied on dried fish and kanji to satisfy their fish cravings during the monsoon fishing ban; today, however, markets remain flooded with fish, often imported or farmed, like pangasius, roopchand and the Norwegian Atlantic Salmon, species far removed from Goa's ecology, he said.



Workshop on 'How to Study Well' at Margao

Samrat Club Margao, in association with Rotary Club Margao, will organise a workshop, 'How to Study Well' by former principal Vishwanath Swar. The session will cover a range of study methods, strategies for improved learning, and tips for creating a productive study timetable. A special highlight of the workshop will be an exclusive interaction with Navinya Dayanand Desai, the Goa State Topper in JEE Mains 2023, who scored an impressive 99.94 percentile and

secured an All India Rank of 417. Navinya, who also topped Goa in JEE Advanced Examination, will share her experiences and valuable insights on how to excel in these competitive exams. This workshop is designed for students from Class 5 to 12, and the first 70 students, who register on a first-come, first-served basis will be given priority.

Venue: Rotary Club AC Hall, Lake Plaza Building, Fatorda
Date: June 14
Time: 3.30 pm to 6 pm

In conversation with Manash Ghosh

The Dogears Bookshop will organise a conversation with Manash Ghosh, veteran journalist and author of 'Mujib's Blunders: The Power and the Plot Behind His Killing', which traces the final years of the Bangladeshi strongman Mujibur Rahman. This session will be interesting for history lovers and politics of the Indian sub-continent. At 6.30 pm, the Goa chapter of Poems and Prose, a poetry/storytelling meet up will be launched. This is open for everyone over the age of 18.

Venue: The Dogears Bookshop, Margao
Date: June 14
Time: 4 pm

Fête de la Musique

A special celebration of Fête de la Musique, France's iconic music festival will be headlined in Goa by Kelly ou moi, an acclaimed French singer-songwriter known from The Voice France, as part of her India tour. Joining her on stage is Karim Ellaboudi on keyboards, adding depth and texture to her immersive performance, followed by performances by Alliance Française Panjim teachers and students.

Venue: Lemon Chilli, Arpora,
Date: June 14
Time: 7 pm onwards



Herald Gaming Console

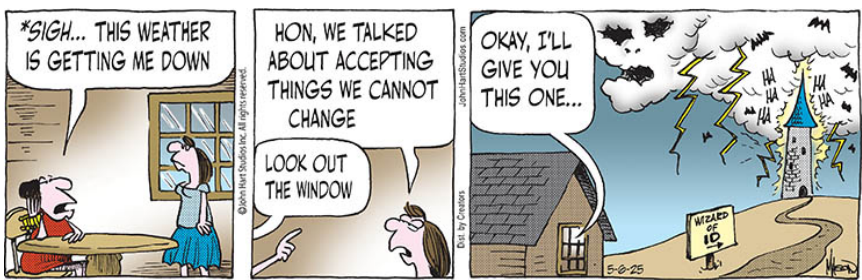
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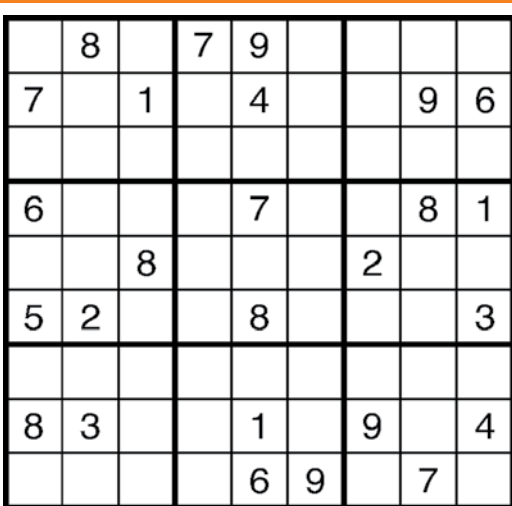


ACROSS
1- Good point; 6- Que ____?; 10- Baseball's 'Walking Man'; Eddie; 14- All, in music; 15- Rent ____; 16- CPR experts; 17- City in Nebraska; 18- Corker; 19- Furniture wood; 20- Polite refusal; 21- Piercing; 23- Bottle lid; 25- ____ tai; 26- IRS IDs; 29- Against; 32- Jack; 37- Earth-friendly prefix; 38- Start the kitty; 39- Set in layers; 40- In spite of; 43- Coercion; 44- Garr of 'Tootsie'; 45- Take to court; 46- Pittsburgh product; 47- Quickly, briefly; 48- Hollow grass; 49- WNW's reverse; 51- Opposite of NNW; 53- Sweets; 58- Fertile soils; 62- Japanese rice wine; 63- Corn units; 64- Month of showers; 65- Shake ____ (hurry); 66- Numbered rds.; 67- Feminist Abzug; 68- You've Made ____ Very Happy; 69- Cong. meeting; 70- Snob;

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Instructions for Sudoku

9 x 9 letter: To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every number from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes

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