

## Obsessed about 'healthy food'? *It can be bad for your health*



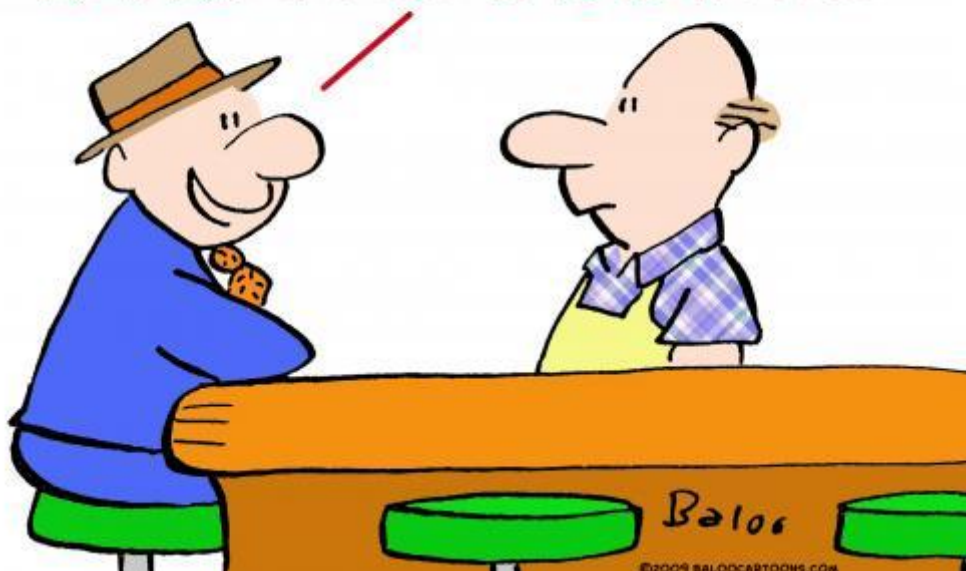
There are people who don't eat 'pani puri' unless it's made using mineral water. And they simply refuse to eat products made from anything except whole wheat. Well, we have news for you. The healthy-food obsession could be bad for your health. And mind you, such cases are on rise. According to clinical psychologist Seema Hingorrani, "I see it all around me. Such people develop obsessive compulsive personality traits and are known as orthorexics."

According to doctors, the most dangerous trend is of making dietary changes based on an understanding of what is nutritious, culled mostly from research off the net and the media. People also blindly follow what dieticians say without questioning the logic behind it. Says nutritionist Honey Shah, "People totally forget about dietary balance. They read somewhere that olive oil is the best oil and so they totally dump other oils. Through some other source they find out that sugar/dairy products are bad for a fit body and so shun every sugar or dairy product source, without realising that they are

prohibiting their body of essential nutrients. Variety is very important otherwise body gradually loses immunity.”

Food thought to contain pesticides, additives or preservatives is also ditched. Some complement lost minerals with vitamin pills. Warns dietician Natasha Kiplan, “There is no substitute to a natural diet. Don’t stuff yourself with vitamin tablets as it leads to an excess of one vitamin and creates imbalance. The body stops producing enzymes that are required to absorb other vitamins.” Agrees fitness instructor Shankar, “I used to work out a lot and took protein and carb supplements. I was advised to consume a lot of water along with, but I didn’t, and now suffer from a severe kidney disorder.”

**"I'M INTO NATURAL FOODS, JOE - GIVE ME A MARTINI WITH A SOYBEAN IN IT."**



Celebrities face similar challenges of alienation to ‘normal’ food. Actor John Abraham reportedly complained about his mom’s food — cooked in ghee and spices — without realising that he was brought up on that! We are all gradually losing our capacity to consume such foods. Senior PR executive Sweta Pujari shares her story. “I’ve never visited a dietician but from what I heard and read on the Web, I started dieting on my own. I got very cautious of what I ate. I stopped taking sugar completely and used to skip dinners after 6 pm and had one fruit for breakfast. I fainted one day and realised I had a low BP problem. I still suffer from severe gastritis. My face started getting pale and I’m highly prone to infections.”

A typical orthorexic at dinner at a social gathering would usually place her order thus: ‘Can this be cooked in olive oil with less spices and no cheese please?’ And that is not it. Despite all the effort gone into placing the order, she can’t eat it peacefully because

of anxiety. Agrees writer Rinku Sharma, “Every time my husband or friends plan a dinner; I stress about the food we will eat and the venue.” She insists her diet pattern is not to lose weight but to ensure that only pure food enters her body. Hence, orthorexics tend to give social gatherings amiss. Delhi-based nutritionist Pallavi Vaishya states, “Such people miss out on companionship. Extreme cases can lead themselves to social exclusion, and higher stress levels.”

Many nutritionists say a pizza can be a healthy eating option, provided it has vegetable toppings. Excluding its maida base, a pizza has vegetables that make it rich in vitamins and minerals. Also, the cheese is high in fat but high in protein as well.

It’s important to expose your body to different kind of foods as it helps adjust immunity. Adds Mumbai-based Dr Hetal Turakhia, “Enjoying your meal gives you a high and keeps you motivated. Stressing over food intake can lead to acidity, low absorption of essential vitamins and minerals. Those who cut down on sugar may have to deal with their blood sugar levels dropping dangerously. It also leads to scaly skin.”

We are living in a time where we are bombarded by conflicting research. The best fix is to have a combination of all foods. “If you find something unhealthy, like refined oil, make your own pack of combination oils (mix refined oil, mustard oil, olive oil). Start knowing your body instead of blindly following diets. Consume sources of Vitamin C to increase immunity and exercise regularly,” suggests Dr Shah. Eat a bit ‘unhealthy’ and find that it’s not a big deal after all, concludes Dr Hingorrani. (TNN 23 September 2009).