

Heaven in a mouthful of *channa*

Londoner cured of acute spine condition after stint in MIOT hospitals

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CHENNAI: Jasbir Kaur Chahal had just gotten off the phone with her mother back in England. "Mum, do you know what I had to eat now?" she had asked her, full of beans. "What's the worst thing for me? *Channa*! Yes, I ate *channa*!" she answered, in raptures over the chickpeas she had eaten for lunch.

Jasbir waits warily for her system to react violently to the chickpeas, but the good doctors here have told the 51-year-old from London that all will be well.

Jasbir had come to MIOT International Hospitals nearly doubled up in pain. She had a history of prolonged use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (painkillers) for a serious condition that affects the spine — ankylosing spondylitis. But that was not her only problem. It was suspected that drug-induced diaphragm disease was keeping her from putting her favourite food into her mouth. She'd been on a liquid and low roughage diet for several months.



Jasbir Kaur Chahal (right) with her husband and MIOT Hospitals chairman Mallika Mohandas.

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While she was careful avoiding food she thought was not good for her, after a point of time, nearly every time she ate, she'd feel ill, have bouts of diarrhoea, vomiting, and a stomach that bloated after a meal. And then there was the crippling pain that made her prone and put her in hospital often. After three years of waiting for a diagnosis through a double-balloon enteroscopy, a fed-up Jasbir made for India, and MIOT.

"You should have taken a

picture of her when we came here first. She was bent over, clutching her stomach in pain and was diagnosed with depression," her husband Joginder Singh explains. The couple came here expecting to wait a fair bit, but within a week, the diagnosis had been made, and the surgery completed, to provide relief.

'Unprecedented'

Doctors found multiple strictures, nine places where the small intestine had narrowed to the point that food

would get blocked and then build up, causing the symptoms. "We've looked at the literature and it certainly seems the first such case reported in India," says George M. Chandu, director, MIOT Advanced Centre for Gastrointestinal and Liver diseases.

He goes on to explain what they did medically: S. Arulprakash, the team's therapeutic endoscopist, performed a double-balloon enteroscopy to study the bowel; the strictures were located, after which the surgeon — V. Baskaran, director, Minimal Access Surgery — took over, removed two feet of the small intestine which had nine narrowed ring-like structures.

After having her bowel reduced by two feet, Jasbir chirps excitedly: "I feel three feet taller already."

She is thrilled the doctors rallied around her and treated her as a person, rather than a statistic. Her natural jolly self is back after years, so much so her husband says, "I came with one wife, and it looks like I'm leaving with another!"