# House lizards: A hygiene risk, not a venomous threat

***Prelims:*** *Current events of national and international importance | Environment*

## Why in News?

*Reports across India linking illness to house lizards falling into meals have fuelled widespread misconceptions about their toxicity.*

## Key Highlights

- **Species name -** Common House Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*).
- Common house geckos (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) can **contaminate** exposed food with pathogens; they are **completely non-poisonous and non-venomous**.
- **Absence of Toxins or Venom -** House geckos do not possess venom glands or secrete inherent toxins on their skin, breath, or body parts that cause fatal poisoning upon contact or accidental ingestion.
- **Microbial Contamination Risk -** House lizards carry overlapping bacterial and parasitic flora, most notably ***Salmonella***, ***Staphylococcus***, and non-tuberculous mycobacteria in their digestive tract, skin, and droppings.
- Falling into uncovered food or water transfers these microbes, leading to standard **food-borne gastroenteritis (salmonellosis)** rather than chemical poisoning.
- **Psychosomatic Reactions -** Medical case studies note that many acute hospital admissions (nausea, vomiting, retching) following the discovery of a lizard in food are triggered by intense psychological revulsion and panic stemming from deep-seated cultural myths.
- **Ecological Benefits-** House geckos are docile, nocturnal insectivores that act as natural indoor pest controllers, feeding on mosquitoes, flies, spiders, and disease vectors.




| Poisonous | Venomous | Pathogen Carrier |
|---|---|---|
| Organisms whose tissues contain toxins that cause harm when ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through touch (e.g., pufferfish, poison dart frogs). | Organisms that actively inject toxins into another creature via a specialized delivery mechanism such as fangs, stingers, or grooved teeth (e.g., cobras, Gila monsters). | An organism that is neither venomous nor poisonous itself, but mechanically or biologically transfers disease-causing microbes (bacteria, parasites) to food or surfaces. |

**Reference**

[The Hindu | House lizards can contaminate a meal]

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