

#HEALTH & FITNESS

Hungry after workout? Check what you should eat and drink

After a workout or long walk, the primary instinct is often to grab a bottle of water and call it a day. However, anyone who's walked out of a gym with a throbbing headache or that hollow, gnawing hunger knows hydration alone doesn't cut it. What you put on your plate, or in your glass, matters just as much as the workout itself.

Chowdhury Tasneem Hasin, Chief Clinical Dietitian and HOD, Dietetics and Nutrition Department, United Hospital Ltd, explained it in simple terms, "During exercise, our muscles get stressed. Protein helps repair them. At the same time, we lose energy, and carbohydrates help bring it back. Carbs are not just fuel for the body; they're essential for the brain too. That's why some people feel dizzy or get headaches right after exercise, their body is "asking" for carbohydrates."

But the good news is, you don't have to chase imported protein powders or some neon-coloured protein bar for a balanced post-workout diet. They are on the same kitchen shelves we often overlook.

"The easiest options are oats and yoghurt, or chira (flattened rice) with yoghurt, or even muri (puffed rice) with yoghurt. These are readily available, and they combine carbs, protein, and probiotics."

That word 'probiotics' is not just another nutrition buzzword for her. It's about balance.

"After a workout, blood



circulation increases in our whole body, along with the gastrointestinal tract, the long passage that food travels through.

That also indicates acid secretion rises, and some people might immediately feel hungry or face acidity. Probiotics, like those in yoghurt, really help balance that out."

For individuals who opt for milk instead of yoghurt, she said, "Oats or chira with chilled milk, banana, and some nuts can be a great alternative. Even just milk and bananas work well. As bananas digest easily and work as a source of both protein and carbs, the fructose in them quickly turns into glucose and covers your carbohydrate needs. Plus, bananas have potassium, which is important as we lose potassium when we sweat."

And sweating is something Chowdhury Tasneem Hasin does not want people to ignore.

"For people who sweat a lot, I'd suggest drinking a glass of oral saline with their snack. A glass of green coconut water or a glass of saline replaces electrolytes faster than plain water. In fact, it hydrates you even better."

Nowadays, it's easier to be tempted by the glossy world of protein powders and bars, but she advises skipping the artificial processed stuff and making it yourself.

"Protein smoothies are a great option, but I'd recommend making them at home rather than buying processed protein powders or bars. Blend milk with bananas, dates, nuts, or other fruits; it's simple and far healthier."

She adds, "Dates or kishmish (raisins) are also very effective on their own. They're rich in potassium and help with rehydration."

Solid food still has its place. "A boiled egg is one of the most reliable post-workout snacks. If being overweight is a concern, then you can add red-wheat roti, whole-grain bread, or brown bread instead of refined ones. Oats, red chira, and other complex carbs are also better choices."

And then there's timing, something people often overlook.

"You should not eat anything, except water or saline, at least 30 minutes before and after a workout. That's because blood circulation is already very high, even in the stomach, during exercise. Eating right after working out makes digestion difficult and leaves you uncomfortable. So, give your body that half-hour to calm down."

In the end, post-workout eating does not need to feel like decoding a chemistry textbook. It's about paying attention to how the body feels, dizzy, sweaty, hungry, or thirsty, and responding with the right mix of protein, carbs, and water.

Your very own kitchen items, like a bowl of yoghurt, a boiled egg, a banana, or a glass of oral saline, might not look extravagant on Instagram, but they do what your body requires: help it recover so you can get on with the rest of your day.

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Photo: Collected

