- Exercise

To make the most of your gym time, focus on your postworkout meals

HT Cafe · 9 Mar 2023 · 04 · Dr Siddhant Bhargava The author is a fitness and nutritional scientist For more such stories, visit healthshots.com

Heading to the gym for a gut-busting workout session? While you may have your workout specifics planned, have you considered the other elements playing a role in your fitness journey? Working out and eating right together help shape a healthier version of yourself. To that end, your pre- and post-workout meals need to be planned wisely to optimise your calorie-burning.

HUNGER AFTER GYM AND POST-WORKOUT MEALS HELP

Endurance exercises consume the glycogen stored in the muscles and reduction can make you feel hungry. Ghrelin, or the 'hunger hormone' is released during exercise, making you hungry. Exercise also triggers endorphin release, leaving you even more prone to hunger. During workout, energy disbursement spikes, which again leads to hunger. So, if you work out on an empty stomach, you feel hungry as the body searches for substitute energy to replace calories burnt during workout.

After workout, carbohydrates help restore the glycogen stored in muscles. Also, a post-workout meal helps in reducing muscle protein breakdown that is a result of exercise. So, proteins after your workout help in repairing and rebuilding the tissues that have broken down during exercising and aid in better muscle growth and strength.

PLANNING YOUR POSTWORKOUT MEAL RIGHT

A post-workout meal that balances carbohydrates and proteins helps in wholesome recovery, also improving your performance in future workouts. To optimise your post-workout meal, a good rule of thumb for post-workout meals is to eat 4g of carbohydrates for every gram of protein. Also, including food rich in healthy fats, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants in your post-workout meals (or snacking) will help beat muscle cramps and inflammation.

It's advisable to eat whole foods that help in easy digestion and are nutrient-dense. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats are ideal options. These food options help equip the body with nutrients that help it recover and become stronger. Some good post-workout meals include egg omelette with avocado, rolled oats meal with banana, almonds, whey protein, cottage cheese, quinoa with sweet potato, Greek yoghurt and granola.

While a post-workout meal is important, what is equally vital is the timing of the post-workout meal. Your body absorbs most nutrients immediately after exercising. So, ideally, a post-workout meal should be eaten within 30 minutes (or an hour at the latest) after your workout.

WHAT NOT TO EAT AFTER A WORKOUT

There are some food items that are a big no after workout, since consuming them will be counterproductive to the physical activity undertaken. These include: Foods high in fats, since these slow down the nutrition absorption process and delay recovery

Processed foods as they are loaded with preservatives and abnormally high amounts of sugar Alcoholic drinks, as they dehydrate the body

It's normal to be hungry after a good gym session. It's important to not wait too long to eat after a workout. Eat a balanced meal that will aid in restocking glycogen, repairing muscle tissues and giving the body the right nutrients for recovery. Stay hydrated by drinking enough water before, during and after workout.

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