

WELLNESS

Here's why you're struggling with post-workout headaches and nausea

Nothing sabotages a good workout like a throbbing headache and dizziness. Here's what to know, and what you can do

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stay out of the gym altogether, sounds a bit radical. We spoke to the pros about what you can do to feel better instead.

Here's why you're getting those pounding headaches after a cardio session

Exertion headaches are caused by an abnormal rapid expansion of the arteries that supply blood to your brain. The rapid increase in blood flow that happens during a workout can make the arteries throb, which is why your head feels like it's pounding, says Dr Vikrant Shah, consulting physician, intensivist, and infectious disease specialist, Zen Multi-speciality Hospital, Mumbai. The intensity of the exercise is a major factor that influences the headaches, because vigorous activities like running or cycling lead to the dilation of blood vessels more than activities like yoga or pilates.

To rectify this, Althea Shah, fitness expert, *énergie fitness*, says that staying hydrated is key. "You can drink a sports drink or coconut water to replace the lost **electrolytes**," she says. When the body is dehydrated, the brain can temporarily contract from fluid loss. This mechanism causes the brain to pull away from the skull, causing pain and resulting in a **dehydration headache**, which can only compound the pain from an exertion headache. If you're working out on an empty stomach, your muscles may not get sufficient glucose to be used as energy. "This reduces the body's stores of glucose causing **hypoglycemia**, which can cause a headache after exercising. You need to have a snack with protein, complex carbohydrates, and fibre before working out to prevent headaches," says Althea.

Warming up is important, according to Althea Shah. Warming up helps gently widen the blood vessels, which prepares them for more blood to flow through, which then reduces the risk of a headache.

How to prevent nausea after an intense workout

When you're working out, your body distributes blood to your muscles to transport oxygen and nutrients, and there is very little blood left to circulate in the digestive tract. This means that your **gastrointestinal system** isn't getting the support it needs, which can leave you feeling nauseous and prone to throwing up. When you exercise very hard, your body is unable to match the oxygen demand, which can build up metabolic wastes (leaving you feeling sick), says Dr Vikrant Shah. Pros suggest eating light snacks that are easily digestible before working out, so you don't put undue stress on the GI tract. High-fat, protein or fibre-rich foods are not the best idea, because they take longer to digest.

Drinking huge gulps of water while you're working out can make you feel sick too. "When you drink too much water, you dilute the electrolyte content causing an effect called hyponatremia which reduces the sodium content in the blood. This gives you cramps and a feeling of dizziness. Take small sips of water during your workout to keep the hydration levels in check," says Althea Shah.