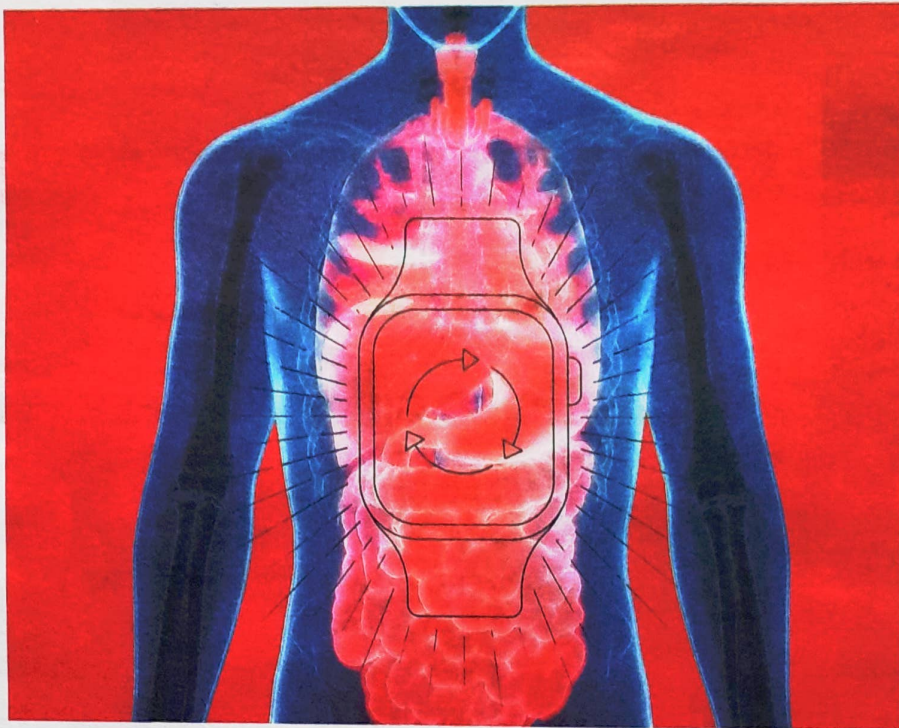


TECH

Out with the screen, in with the sweat. That appears to be the new mantra of a growing wave of fitness-oriented devices flooding the market. These gadgets represent everything that an Apple Watch or a Samsung Galaxy Watch is not — no glowing display demanding your attention every few minutes, no notifications nudging you mid-burpee, no temptation to check your emails while supposedly on a recovery run. From early movers Whoop and Oura to the recently launched Fitbit Air, Amazfit Helio Strap, and the eagerly anticipated Luna Band, the demand for screen-less health devices is well and truly gathering momentum.

If Whoop can get the job done for Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, Masters champion Rory McIlroy, football icon Cristiano



BATTERY LIFE IS ANOTHER COMPELLING ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF SCREEN-LESS DEVICES. WITHOUT A DISPLAY TO POWER, THE BATTERY ONLY NEEDS TO SUSTAIN THE SENSORS, WHICH MAKES FOR DRAMATICALLY LONGER USAGE BETWEEN CHARGES

← Companies across the world, including Samsung and Apple, are investing heavily in understanding how technology can predict health events before they occur. Whether it is an Apple Watch, a Samsung Galaxy Watch, or a screen-less band or smart ring, these devices are becoming credible biometric monitors. Illustration: The Telegraph

secured back-to-back Masters titles. One can only imagine what the numbers looked like during the front nine.

Battery life is another compelling argument in favour of screen-less devices. Without a display to power, the battery only needs to sustain the sensors, which makes for dramatically longer usage between charges. The Fitbit Air lasts a full week on a single charge, the Oura Ring runs for up to eight days, and the Whoop 5.0 offers an impressive two weeks of battery life. The Apple Watch, magnificent as it is, can barely survive 36 hours without reaching desperately for its charging puck.

Apple, naturally, is not standing still. According to Bloomberg, the company plans to push further into wearables with smart glasses, AI-focused earbuds, and new neck- and shirt-worn devices. Apple's strength in silicon, sensors, and materials engineering positions it well for a lightweight health-focused wearable paired with subscription coaching services. The company is also reportedly pursuing a long-held ambition from the Steve Jobs era: non-invasive glucose monitoring, which would allow sensors to detect elevated blood sugar levels without a single finger prick. If successful, this could be genuinely transformative for millions of people.

Closer to home, Indian health intelligence company Luna has introduced the Luna Band and opened its waitlist. Described as a voice-first wearable built around peak performance, it promises to go beyond traditional tracking by placing the user's daily schedule at the forefront — planning the day hour by hour for high-performing individuals who want every variable optimised.

The screen-less revolution is well underway. Whatever tracker you choose to strap on — whether you are chasing athletic glory or simply trying to make sense of why you feel exhausted every Monday morning — make sure it is one that gives you the right data at the right time. The goal, after all, is not more information. It is better information, used wisely.

PULSE OVER PIXELS

How screen-less wearables are becoming the secret weapon of elite athletes

Ronaldo, and India's own Virat Kohli, it is fair to say that most of us mere mortals should find plenty to like about what these devices have to offer. Let us be honest, most users want far more than a daily step count. They want genuine insight into their progress, their recovery, their sleep quality, and perhaps even a gentle reminder that three consecutive late nights are not, in fact, a training strategy.

This is precisely the aim of the new Fitbit Air, from Google. Rather than bombarding users with on-screen data throughout the day, it quietly collects information and presents it via a smartphone app, where it can be reviewed thoughtfully — perhaps once or twice a day, rather than glanced at frantically between meetings.

Compare this to the 10 to 15 times a day one might peek at a smartwatch screen, and the appeal of a screen-free wristband becomes rather obvious.

The Oura Ring has taken a similarly discreet approach, and has found a particularly loyal following among women. The sleek titanium band monitors energy levels, stress, sleep, and even fertility signals. It now includes a chatbot to address questions around menstrual cycles, and in May introduced features to monitor birth control and symptoms of ageing, helping users anticipate ovulation, hormonal shifts, and the approach of menopause. There have also been reports of the ring being used as a tool to take richer data to medical appointments.

BILLIONS ON THE WRIST

Companies across the world, including Samsung and Apple, are investing heavily in understanding how technology can predict health events before they occur. Whether it is an Apple Watch, a Samsung Galaxy Watch, or a screen-less band or smart ring, these devices are becoming credible biometric monitors, capturing information on respiratory rates, blood oxygen levels, sleep duration, and much more. According to Bloomberg, the global wearables market was estimated to be worth over \$90 billion last year. The question is not simply what data is being collected, but how — and how often — it is actually consumed.

Whoop, which has been in the game for 14 years, recently raised \$575 million in new financing at a valuation of \$10.1 billion, underscoring the remarkable appetite for subscription-based health tech. The wristband pairs with a smartphone app and delivers metrics such as sleep quality, strain, and exercise recovery. This funding round followed a more than \$900 million financing for Oura in October, confirming that investors are as excited about this category as the athletes wearing the products.

Whoop and Fitbit Air, despite operating in the same broad space, pursue rather different business models. Whoop, with over 2.5 million subscribers, requires users to sign up for a membership plan — the device is, frankly, rather useless

without it. Plans in India are priced at ₹21,990 for Whoop One, ₹28,990 for Peak, and ₹47,050 for Whoop Life (all on Amazon). Fitbit Air, by contrast, charges upfront for the hardware, with an optional Google Health Premium subscription per month. This means users can purchase a Fitbit Air and immediately access activity tracking and sleep data without spending another penny — though the premium tier does unlock personalised workout plans, deep sleep insights, and medical record summaries for those who want the full picture.

TENNIS COURT TO THE GOLF COURSE

The sporting world, too, is beginning to warm to screen-less wearables.

During the Australian Open, players including Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner, and Aryna Sabalenka were told that fitness trackers were not permitted on court. But the times are changing. The French Open is currently allowing players to wear devices such as Whoop on a trial basis, an experiment that is set to extend to Wimbledon and the US Open later this year. Whoop has already received approval from the International Tennis Federation for in-match use.

McIlroy, an investor in Whoop, wore his band throughout the Masters, and following his victory at Augusta some of his health statistics were officially published. The data revealed that his heart rate spiked to 135bpm as he stood on the 18th tee during the final round, before dropping to a rather more composed 105bpm for the tap-in putt that



(Left to right) Whoop, Fitbit Air and Luna Band

— Mathures Paul