

. . . FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

EATING FOR ENERGY

WHY AM I SO TIRED?

Low energy levels and fatigue are common complaints for many people. If you are constantly feeling drained and exhausted, a doctor or other qualified health professional should be consulted to rule out illness, chronic disease or medication side effects. Once these causes have been addressed, consider making some simple lifestyle changes. Good stress management, getting at least 7 to 8 hours of high quality sleep, exercising regularly, and eating healthy meals and snacks each day, are all important strategies for boosting energy levels.

HOW DOES FOOD IMPACT ENERGY LEVELS?

Research suggests that what, when, and how much you eat can help to determine how you feel. Energy-draining habits include skipping meals, choosing too many foods high in fat and added sugars, and eating large portions. Following an overall healthy eating plan, including regular well-balanced meals and snacks, is a great way to fend off that sluggish feeling.

The USDA “My Plate” tool can help you plan healthy meals for optimal energy.



THE HYDRATION FACTOR

Many people go for a long period of time without drinking much fluid, which leads to fatigue and headaches. Drinking plenty of water or other unsweetened beverages consistently throughout the day can be very helpful for increasing energy levels.

“HIGH ENERGY” DIETARY STRATEGIES

- ✓ **Get your B-vitamins.** Studies show that low levels of folate and B-12 are sometimes associated with fatigue and depression. Food sources of folate include fortified whole grain cereals, beans and peas, dark green leafy vegetables, sunflower seeds, and oranges. Foods high in B-12 include salmon, lean beef, low-fat dairy, and eggs.
- ✓ **Boost your intake of omega-3’s.** This may help to improve memory and mood, making you feel more energized. At least one good source of omega-3 fatty acids daily is recommended. Choose from oily fish (salmon, mackerel and sardines), ground flaxseeds, walnuts and omega-3 fortified eggs.
- ✓ **Limit refined carbohydrates.** Refined white starch and added sugars in food and drinks can cause blood sugars levels to rapidly rise and fall, leaving you feeling cranky and tired. To lessen blood sugar swings, choose high quality carbohydrates, such as vegetables, unsweetened fruit, beans and peas, brown rice and oatmeal.
- ✓ **Incorporate protein with meals and snacks.** Healthy protein sources include nuts, beans and peas, skinless chicken, lean beef and pork, and eggs. Protein helps keep blood sugar levels stable and promotes increased levels of brain chemicals that make you feel more alert and focused.
- ✓ **Eat something every 4 to 5 hours.** This provides your body with a constant supply of energy and keeps blood sugar levels stable. Plus, it is easy to do. Here’s one example of a healthy eating pattern—have breakfast or a morning snack within 90 minutes of waking, lunch, an afternoon snack and a sensible dinner.

ENERGY DRINKS, BARS AND SUPPLEMENTS

Energy drinks are very popular and may result in a short burst of energy, however daily reliance on caffeine can backfire. When the caffeine rush wears off, the body is left with nothing for energy, resulting in exhaustion, hunger and the tendency to overeat. Caffeine may also be a problem for people with high blood pressure, anxiety or an irregular heart beat. If you have any of these conditions, check with your doctor to see if occasional caffeine use is safe.

Many energy drinks, bars and supplements also contain the amino acid taurine and B-vitamins. These nutrients play an important role in energy production, but there is evidence that natural food sources of these nutrients are more effective. Your best bet is to focus on making overall healthy food choices and fitting physical activity into your daily routine.

AVOIDING THE MID-AFTERNOON SLUMP

Feeling sluggish during the afternoon hours may be directly related to your food habits. Follow these eating tips and you may find yourself running circles around your co-workers.

First, avoid eating too little or too much for lunch. Eating too little robs your body of its fuel supply and lowers your metabolism. Eating too much can cause large swings in blood sugar levels which channels a large amount of energy toward digestion. Both scenarios can result in lethargy. Remember to eat slowly and stop when you feel comfortable but not over-stuffed.

What you eat for lunch is just as important. Make sure your lunch includes lean protein, as well as fresh produce and whole grains. This will help to increase alertness and slow the release of insulin for a sustained energy level. A mid-afternoon snack can also help. Here are some snack ideas that will provide an energy boost any time of the day:

- Any mix of nuts (1/4 cup) and dried fruit (1/4 cup)
- Single-serve low-fat yogurt topped with 2 tablespoons of natural granola
- 1 serving of fresh fruit dipped in 2 tablespoons of almond butter or peanut butter
- 3 cups of air-popped popcorn tossed with 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 5 whole grain crackers with 1/4 cup hummus (chick pea dip)
- Half of a sandwich made with whole grain bread
- 1/2 cup berries and 1 ounce walnuts
- Smoothie made with frozen fruit, flaxseeds, and low-fat milk
- 1 ounce of natural tortilla chips with a 1/4 cup of salsa



RESOURCES

www.eatright.org

www.usda.gov

www.todaysdietitian.com

For More Information visit
www.WellnessCoachesUSA.com