

10 Tips for Increasing Energy

Often, people turn to high-caffeine beverages and energy drinks to give them the boost they need to get through the day. However, many of these drinks are loaded with refined sugars and high amounts of caffeine, which can cause a burst of energy, then a rapid crash.

Learn lifestyle strategies that help eliminate this rollercoaster effect while boosting energy throughout the day.

Get a Good Night's Sleep

Getting between seven and nine hours of sleep per night is optimal. However, the actual time a person falls asleep is also important. Sleeping from 2 a.m. to 10 a.m. may not be as restorative as sleeping from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. This is because many restorative processes, including hormone secretion, body temperature and digestion, are linked to natural light exposure. Aim to go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on the weekends.

Get Moving

A brief bout of exercise (as little as 10 minutes) can improve energy levels and a person's mood. Physical activity, even walking, is a great energy booster. Walking can be done anywhere and only requires a good pair of shoes. To achieve health benefits, it is recommended that adults engage in about 2.5 hours of moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking, each week.

Eat a Healthy Breakfast

People who skip breakfast are essentially running on empty. Research has shown that breakfast eaters have more energy throughout the day, in addition to more success with weight loss and maintenance. Keep breakfast healthy by incorporating sources of lean protein, healthy fats and whole grains, such as whole-wheat toast with peanut butter and a banana.

Stay Hydrated

Even slight dehydration can leave a person feeling tired and lethargic. Keep a tall glass of water or a water bottle with you throughout the day. Note that hunger is sometimes mistaken for thirst, but fatigue can also be a mask for thirst. Cut down on alcohol intake because it dehydrates and can also interfere with deep sleep.

Reduce Stress

Stress has a major impact on energy levels. Stress can leave a person feeling both mentally and physically exhausted. Even low but chronic levels of stress will negatively affect a person over time. Try to take 20 minutes for yourself every day just to relax. Turn the TV and computer off, sip some tea, and read a book or listen to music.

Choose Whole Grains, Limit Sugar

Eating whole grains provides a slow and steady release of fuel (carbohydrates) into the bloodstream, keeping energy levels consistent and balanced throughout the day. Refined-flour products, sweets and other high-sugar foods cause a spike in blood sugar, which allows for a temporary energy boost that is then followed by a rapid decrease in blood sugar. This rollercoaster of high and low blood sugar leaves a person depleted.

Turn Coffee into a Protein Drink

Put skim or reduced-fat milk in coffee instead of creamer. The protein in milk helps sustain energy levels, as well as provides some bone-building calcium. Create a healthy breakfast by pairing it with a healthy fat, such as an ounce of almonds.

Choose Healthy Snacks

It is important to snack throughout the day. However, make smart snack choices. Have a couple of snacks that combine protein, fiber and a little fat, such as an apple and string cheese or yogurt and nuts. This helps to sustain energy levels throughout the day. The carbohydrates provide an energy boost, protein keeps energy up and the fat makes energy last.

Increase Magnesium Intake

Eating a varied and healthy diet is important to ensure nutrition needs are met; however, if energy levels are not where they should be, it could indicate a magnesium deficiency. Magnesium is an important mineral needed for more than 300 biochemical reactions in the body. It can specifically affect energy levels because magnesium is necessary to break down glucose for use by the body as energy. Recommended daily amounts—400–420 mg for men and 310–320 mg for women—can be obtained by eating a variety of foods such as whole grains, beans, milk, fish and nuts.

Achieve pH Balance

After being digested, absorbed and metabolized, foods release either an acid or an alkaline base (bicarbonate) into the blood. Grains, fish, meat, poultry, shellfish, cheese, milk and salt all produce acid. Fruits and vegetables produce alkaline. A diet high in acid-producing foods causes an imbalance between acid and alkaline, which could lead to loss of essential minerals such as potassium, magnesium, calcium and sodium as the body tries to restore equilibrium. This imbalance is thought to affect immune systems and decrease energy levels. To ensure a balance, be sure to eat a diet that includes lots of alkaline foods, such as leafy green vegetables, beets, celery, figs, dates and cantaloupes.

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