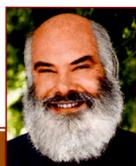


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 Author of EIGHT WEEKS TO OPTIMUM HEALTH

Andrew Weil

Eating Well for Optimum Health
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8 NATURAL ENERGIZERS

Most days I'm full of energy, some days I'm not. Often I know the reason why. Energy levels are largely influenced by the amount of sleep you've gotten, what you've had to eat or drink, or how active you've been. To resolve an energy crisis, I'd first consider any lifestyle and emotional factors that may be contributing to the problem.

When fatigue comes on suddenly or lingers, it can be a sign of illness. Fatigue is a common symptom of health problems such as an underlying infection, hypothyroidism, depression, sleep disturbances, autoimmune disorders, chronic fatigue syndrome, even cancer. Some drugs and over-the-counter medications can also make you drowsy.

What follows are eight natural remedies to help you recharge your batteries. Some approaches may give you a short-term shot of adrenaline, while others are long-term energy-boosting strategies. If you still feel drained after trying several of these ideas, I suggest you schedule a checkup with your physician.

1. Hit the sack.

Getting enough sleep is the most important thing you can do to ward off fatigue and feel more energetic. Individuals vary in their sleep needs, but feeling tired and less alert during the day are sure signs that your body needs more rest. A brief nap (when possible) can be refreshing, although I tend to feel groggier afterwards.

2. Eat small, frequent meals.

When you eat can affect your energy levels as much as what you eat. To function properly, your brain needs to refuel with a fresh supply of glucose (blood sugar) — a good reason to start each day with a healthful breakfast. Keep energy flowing with small, frequent meals or wholesome snacks throughout the day, which keep blood-sugar levels steady. I'm not a big fan of energy bars; they tend to be expensive and high in fat. Better bets for snacking include fresh or dried fruit, vegetable sticks, yogurt, whole-grain bread or crackers, even nuts. Eat less chocolate, candy, or other sugary treats that give you a quick "sugar high" followed by a "crash" when glucose levels drop. Large meals (a big lunch, for example) can also flood your system with excess insulin, resulting in a fatigue-inducing slump.

3. Be active.

You may need to expend some energy in order to have more of it. I find a brisk walk or swim invigorating, probably because exercising releases endorphins, the body's own feel-good chemicals. By shunting more oxygen to the brain and working muscles, activity can leave you more clear-headed and revitalized. At work, walk around or climb stairs to get your blood flowing. Another plus: a stronger body is also more resistant to fatigue.

4. Drink up.

Check your fluid levels, since dehydration (not just hunger) is a common cause of fatigue. Be sure to drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of good-quality water throughout the day, especially after exercising or in hot weather. Limit caffeinated beverages (which may give you an initial jolt, but later can add to fatigue) and alcoholic drinks (which are depressants). In addition, both caffeinated and alcoholic beverages are dehydrating. If you're trying to wean yourself from coffee, drink green tea instead: It tends to have less caffeine than coffee and may also help protect against cancer and heart disease.

5. Enjoy nature's energy.

Any amount of sunshine and fresh air can feel energizing. Natural light can influence levels of melatonin, the hormone that regulates how sleepy you feel. But natural light is scarce during the winter months in the North, and in some people, this light deficit can trigger a change in brain chemistry and a form of depression known as seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. Those with milder versions of the winter blahs may benefit from opening shades or even investing in full-spectrum light bulbs, which simulate sunlight.

6. Breathe for stimulation.

For a quick (noncaffeinated) pick-me-up, I do the yogic Stimulating Breath, also known as the Bellows Breath. Like a bellows pumping air, this simple breathing exercise involves a rapid series of brief inhalations and exhalations through your nose. At first, try this technique for just 10 seconds. Additional breathing exercises can be found in my books or on my CD/audiotape recording set, *Breathing: The Master Key to Self Healing*, for sale at (888) 337-9345.

7. Try a tonic.

Herbal tonics are safe, nontoxic ways to maintain energy and boost your immune system at the same time. Three of my favorite energy-boosting tonics are cordyceps mushroom, Siberian ginseng, and ginseng (the latter is not recommended for women with estrogen-dependent ailments or cancers). Try one of these daily (follow package directions), and give it a good two-month trial.

8. Think positively.

A positive outlook is rejuvenating, while negative emotions can sap your strength. Common emotional drainers include procrastination, boredom, anger, disorganization, conflict, and stress. Find work, hobbies, and experiences that you can feel passionate about and spend more time around positive-minded people.

