

Boost Your ENERGY

By the time 3:00 p.m. rolls around, do you feel like your eyelids weigh about 10 tons? Eating smarter will make all the difference. BY SEÁNAN FORBES



What with working, exercising, catching up with friends, maintaining (or finding) romance, fitting in meals and still being relaxed enough to get a good night's sleep, is it any wonder that it's hard to keep a natural buzz? You don't have to turn to pills or caffeine-laced drinks to change your day from gray to full-on, living color. Just look in your cupboard.

Eat – and Drink – Right

Nutritionist and personal trainer Lyssie Lakatos says bad food choices can deplete energy. High on her list: not eating frequently enough and eating too much sugar. Too much sugar brings energy crashes, so avoid processed products and have a piece of fruit instead.

"Salty foods also make you feel heavy, bloated and sluggish," she says, "and it takes energy away from the body, as your body fights to dilute the salt – so you lose water as well." Replace salt with spices.

Don't skip breakfast. Lakatos advocates choosing complex carbohydrates, but also says, "You do want to have a little bit of protein. Protein takes longer to digest, so it maintains your energy longer."

Help your body to rebuild itself. "Have a spoonful of honey before you go to bed," Lakatos recommends. The honey fuels restoration, which means you'll wake up in the morning feeling stronger.

Work it Out

Exercise builds energy. Fred Green, health and wellness specialist at the Mayo Clinic's Dan Abraham Healthy Living Center, explains that when we exercise, "Metabolic rate increases. Even though we're working harder, it seems as if we have more energy because we're burning calories more efficiently."

According to Josh Fly, senior personal training manager at the Chelsea Piers Sports Center in New York City, timing is

important. "Work out in the morning or the afternoon," Fly says. It takes a while for your body to relax, so an intense evening workout can affect your sleep.

Both Green and Fly underscore the fact that your body needs rest. Get enough sleep and take at least one day off a week from the gym. Strength builds during rest times, when the body repairs itself.

Sleep it Off

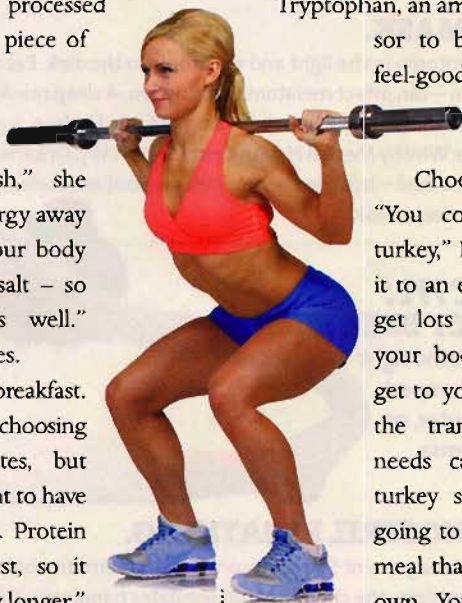
Craig Hudson is a psychiatrist and the medical director at the Whitby Mental Health Center in Whitby, Ontario. Hudson says that in order to get a good night's sleep – and to feel good about ourselves – we need tryptophan in our brains.

Tryptophan, an amino acid, is a precursor to both serotonin (the feel-good chemical) and melatonin (which promotes sleep).

Choose balanced meals. "You could eat an entire turkey," Hudson says, taking it to an extreme, "and you'd get lots of tryptophan into your body, but it wouldn't get to your brain." To make the transition, tryptophan needs carbohydrates, so a turkey sandwich on rye is going to be a more effective meal than the protein on its own. Your mom was right: warm milk (protein) and carbs are good for you.

Hudson tells his patients to defer dessert. Have dinner, and then have dessert before going to bed. Those carbs will take the tryptophan where it's needed: to the brain.

Mom was right about sleep too. Hudson cites the Nurses Study, which followed 80,000 nurses over 10 years. Nurses who worked night shifts over 25 years had a 36 percent higher rate of breast cancer than their peers. Setting yourself up for a good night's rest has significant impact not only on your sleep tonight, but also on your health 25 years from now. Now that's planning for the future.



Quick Tips to Boost Your Energy

CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT, EVEN IF ONLY FOR A FEW MINUTES.

Been indoors all day? Get out. Walk around the block or head to the nearest tree and back again. While the walk moves your muscles, the change of stimuli will energize your brain. When you get back, you'll feel livelier inside and out.

HAVE A SNACK.

Nutritionist and personal trainer Lyssie Lakatos suggests going a little bit nuts: Grab a handful of pistachios. Pistachios are among the lowest calorie, lowest fat and highest fiber nuts.



DRINK UP.

Lakatos recommends tea (hot or iced). "Theanine, an amino acid in tea, creates calmness while establishing alertness. Meanwhile, the caffeine provides a quick pick-me-up. Knowing that you're getting powerful antioxidants gives you a boost too."

Drink chilled water. "Nothing will wake you up like ice cold water," Lakatos says. "It will make you feel more alive and alert. Plus as you hydrate properly, water will be available to carry oxygen and nutrients to your muscles."



AIR YOUR MUSCLES.

Exercise physiologist Jim Wharton, of Wharton Performance, has been in the fitness industry for 27 years. He says, "The muscles move with oxygen and blood. If we're not getting a good feed there, then we don't operate as efficiently." To get the blood flowing and rid yourself of stress, gently swing each limb through its full range of motion.

MOVE IT.

Josh Fly, senior personal training manager at the Chelsea Piers Sports Center in New York City, says his favorite exercise for getting the blood moving is the standing squat, which strengthens your upper body, abs and legs. Even a few reps will pump you. He also has his clients do this stretch: Stand with your heels, head and shoulders flat against a wall and gently, from the back of your head, reach your head toward the ceiling. You'll feel hours of compression slide away.

TOP THREE REASONS FOR Lack of Energy

Problem: **NOT SLEEPING.**

Tossing and turning is a common problem, especially when there's distracting light.



Fix: **GET A SLEEP MASK.**

Tryptophan makes serotonin in the light and melatonin in the dark. Even a little bit of light – one candle in the room – can affect melatonin production. A sleep mask will take care of that. Try them on to find one that fits you well. According to Craig Hudson, a psychiatrist and the medical director at the Whitby Mental Health Center in Whitby, Ontario, the most expensive masks aren't always the best – but the ones airlines give out are useless. Give yourself time to get used to wearing a sleep mask.

Problem: **INCORRECT BREATHING**

It's hard to breathe right when you're slumped before a computer, or when you're tense.



Fix: **ALTERNATE-NOSTRIL BREATHING.**

In the UK, the Stress Management Society recommends alternate-nostril breathing as a way to balance the brain's serotonin, the chemical that regulates happiness. Fold the first and middle fingers of your right hand, leaving the pinkie and ring fingers extended. With your thumb, lightly squeeze your right nostril closed. Inhale slowly through your left nostril. Pinch both nostrils closed. Hold the breath for a moment. Holding your left nostril closed with your ring and pinkie fingers, release your right nostril and exhale through it. Pause for a moment and then inhale through your right nostril. Close that off, pause, release the left side and exhale through your left nostril. This completes one cycle. Give yourself eight or 10 cycles to unwind.



Problem: **CHOOSING THE WRONG SNACK.**

Sweets give you a quick energy-high, but this is followed by a crash: Your body shuttles the large dose of sugar to your muscles, leaving you with low blood sugar, signaling your brain that you need another quick pick-me-up.

Fix: **KEEP ENERGY-BOOSTING SNACKS ON HAND.**

Nutritionist and personal trainer Lyssie Lakatos suggests packing Ziploc bags of two tablespoons of nuts mixed with a cup of whole-grain cereal.