

5 Simple Ways to Improve your Energy

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"Wouldn't it be great if there were 28 hours in the day?"... We've all had days where it seems there just aren't enough hours to get it all done. But what if you could work and play more efficiently and effectively - what if you could increase your productivity so that 24 hours gave you time to spare for all you need and want to do in life?

By improving your energy, you will not only find you are more effective and efficient by increased productivity – you will likely also find your enjoyment of your life increases dramatically. Here are 5 simple steps you can take to increase your energy and improve your life:

1. Hydrate your body

Our bodies consist of approximately 65% water. Water is a key component in our brain and muscle tissue and is a key component of our blood plasma which helps nutrients and toxins travel in and out of our bodies. Despite the importance of water, some reports indicate that up to 75% of us are chronically dehydrated. Even mild dehydration can lead to such difficulties as constipation, dry skin and thirst and moderate dehydration can result in headaches, slowed metabolism, poor short term memory, fatigue and an inability to focus.

The amount of water required to maintain proper hydration is different for everyone. But a good rule of thumb is to drink a minimum of 8 glasses of water every day. If you exercise, drink coffee or other caffeinated beverages, spend your day in hot or cold environments, or if you are pregnant or nursing you need to increase that amount. Remember, if you are experiencing thirst, you are already dehydrated, so drink up!

2. Get adequate rest

Did you know chronic sleep loss can contribute to health problems such as weight gain, high blood pressure, and a decrease in the immune system's power? According to an article at CBC.ca, "an estimated 3.3 million Canadians age 15 or older have problems getting enough sleep." Further, the article reports that "the 2002 Canadian Community Health Survey found that just under one-fifth (18%) of these people average less than five hours of sleep a night." So just how does lack of sleep have this impact on our bodies? Lack of sleep is linked to an increase in cytokine molecules that control immune response; the increase of these cytokine molecules results in inflammation and changes to your blood chemistry that may be involved in a variety of diseases including heart disease, diabetes and neurological conditions. Lack of sleep also has an impact on our body's ability to regulate the hormones that control hunger – which accounts for why we tend to reach for more snacks and treats when we're feeling sleepy.

So, how much sleep do you need to prevent all this? The bottom line is it varies from person to person. Most adults need around 7 hours a night; however a good rule of thumb is to consider how you feel when you wake up. If you feel energized and ready for your day – you likely had enough! If not, perhaps look at how you can get to bed earlier or talk to your doctor about how you can increase the quality of your sleep.

3. Manage your stress

Stress is known to contribute to the following health ailments and diseases: back pain, insomnia, chronic fatigue syndrome, heart disease, cancer, endometriosis, irritable bowel syndrome, headaches and low immune functioning, to name a few. Stress is an energy buster. Unfortunately, stress is a fact of life. Therefore it is up to you to manage your stress effectively to maintain high levels of energy and wellness. How can you better manage your stress? Here are a few tips to help you get started:

- Learn to say "No" – remember you can't do it all, and do it all well. Choose what is important.
- Set priorities – family, career, social, community - find a balance between them all without sacrificing time for you.
- Set realistic goals – look at your life and your commitments and consider what is realistic for you.
- Exercise regularly – the hormones released during exercise are natural stress busters!
- Take a breather – if you're in a moment of stress, why not take a 10 second time out? Shut your eyes, take a deep breath and count to 10.

4. Fuel your body

Making smart choices when fuelling your body will not only help you handle stress better – but it will also enable your body to function at greater efficiency, giving you more energy and vigour. The important thing to remember when eating for energy is to eat high quality foods (whole fresh foods with good amounts of fibre and healthy fats) and eat regularly. By eating breakfast when you get up to start your engine and then eating every 3-4 hours to maintain your fuel level, your body will be a more efficient and effective machine. Remember – our brains need sugars (natural ones from complex carbohydrates like fruits and whole grains) to function – so don't forget those healthy carbs!

5. Listen to your body

We all have natural energy highs and lows – and we can either fight them or work with them. For example, if you know you are a morning person, plan the majority of your activities for first thing in the morning. If you plan to do something in the evening – especially if it involves physical activity – you may need to have a commitment to ensure it happens. Look at your personal energy highs and lows. Consider how hydration and fuelling may be impacting them, and then work with your body rather than against it.

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