

## INCREASE YOUR ENERGY

In a society that trains and expects us to burn the candle at both ends, it is no surprise that a common complaint is low energy. Fatigue and malaise can be a sign of disease or deficiency; or it can simply be the result of imbalance in your life. If you feel that your energy isn't what it used to be, it is worthwhile to rule out the worst-case scenarios, and to make the adjustments needed to find that energy again. For many, the question of "Why am I so tired?" is a rhetorical one, with the obvious cause being self-mistreatment. If your energy is low, you must ask yourself if there are lifestyle adjustments that need to be made. Sleeping, exercising, staying on a fairly consistent schedule, and eating a proper diet are all integral parts of maintaining a high level of energy. In a nearly subconscious effort to ward off increasing fatigue, we often find ourselves using more and more stimulants (i.e., caffeine and/or sugar) to increase our energy. One cup of coffee turns into two, or an afternoon snack gets sweeter and sweeter to get you through the day. What begins as a nice boost during short bouts of fatigue increases to a dependency. Your body adjusts so that you no longer benefit from the high (the boost of the caffeine or sugar), but instead you must respond to the low, with the addition of more and more of the stimulant. Two cups of coffee turn into three, three into four, and instead of realizing the highs, your body begins to only recognize the lows.

If you have gotten yourself into this cycle, the easiest way out is to quit cold turkey. Simply design your own detox: within a few days, wean yourself from caffeine and sugar, and then avoid all caffeine, sugar, sugar substitutes, and processed foods for at least 10 days. Focus on a whole foods diet, primarily of organic fruits, vegetables, fish, and legumes, drink plenty of water (you should drink in ounces per day the number of your weight in pounds) and eat on a regular schedule. During this process, you will not only get the caffeine out of your system, but also food additives that decrease energy; and possibly stored toxins that are weighing you down.

After your "detox," if you are still fatigued, it is time to check in with your physician. Although it is important to rule out the worst-case scenarios of cancer or other chronic diseases, most fatigue complaints are not this dire. Lab work including a simple CBC (Complete Blood Count) should be done to rule out anemia (low iron or B 12), and those age 50-plus should especially be screened for proper thyroid functioning. Glucose levels will show any abnormalities with blood sugar metabolism. Barring any additional complaints, this is likely where the investigation with your general physician will end. However, a naturopath or physician will likely also investigate adrenal gland health. Or you can do a trial of adrenal support to see if your energy improves. B5, or pantothenic acid (generally 100-200mg), Vitamin C (at least 1 gram a few times per day), and herbs such as Ashwagandha and Astragalus are great ways to provide your adrenals with support. Clinically, we also often use desiccated adrenal gland as a way to spare some of the adrenal effort.

If your adrenals don't seem to be the culprit of your low energy, and again, there is no impetus to searching for further diagnoses, the next strategy is to promote the production of energy as much as possible. Energy comes from food, and all of our food at some point during digestion and absorption becomes glucose (this is why we begin to crave more sugar, or glucose, when we are fatigued). The process through which glucose becomes useable energy within our cells is called the Krebs cycle. The Krebs cycle is a system of hundreds of chemical reactions in the body,

beginning with glucose and ending with a unit of energy called ATP (Adenosine Tri-Phosphate). Simply put, if you can promote the production of ATP, you will have more energy; you will also have improved brain function, heart function, and kidney function, just to name a few.

Promotion of the Krebs cycle is possible by increasing co-factors (particular nutrients) which are necessary for its reactions to occur. Perhaps the most common cofactor used in supporting the Krebs cycle is Vitamin B12 and other B-vitamins, especially B6 and folic acid. Many find an injection of B 12 provides a quick and sustainable boost of energy, even if B 12 levels were determined to be normal on lab work. Alternatively, a sublingual (under the tongue) form of B12 can be used (usually at 1000mcg per day). B 12 should not be taken orally, as absorption is often compromised. Other B-vitamins (or a B-complex) can be taken orally and can often provide a boost in energy.

Coenzyme Q10 may also be used in an attempt to decrease fatigue. Also a cofactor in the Krebs cycle, CoQ 10 will be especially low in those taking statin medications, but should be considered by anyone needing support for energy, heart health, or memory. Two other metabolites in the production of ATP, or cellular energy, have shown positive study results in self-reported improved energy. L-carnitine is typically taken orally or given by injection (500mg two to three times per day). D-ribose is usually taken as a powder that can be added to a beverage (5 grams two to three times per day). Both have been tested for long-term safety. L-carnitine is also often used to promote heart health and memory; competitive athletes often use d-ribose prior to competition to promote endurance. You don't have to live with daily fatigue. If you feel that your energy isn't what it should be, first check in with yourself to assure that you are treating your body well. If fatigue persists, see your doctor to rule out causes, and to decide what might best support your energy production needs.

**Any recommendations should be overseen by your treating physician.**

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