

Energy Boosters

Ways to Get You Through the Day

Rebecca Jones

No amount of coaxing, pleading, or pedal pumping could get the engine in the rental car to turn over. It was going nowhere. The travelers had filled the car with unleaded fuel, but it had a diesel engine. It had been able to run a little way on the wrong fuel, but not far. And when it finally stopped, it stopped for good.

Sometimes cars and humans aren't so different. Both need the right fuel to run at maximum efficiency. Put too much of the wrong stuff in, and a breakdown may be unavoidable.

Here are some tips to keep your body humming along like a well-tuned engine, full of energy.

so-called "energy bars" are unpalatable but good for you, while candy bars are delicious but bad. Many energy bars are filled with sugar, so read labels, and look for high fiber, high protein, and limited carbs.

Nuts are among the best choices for healthy, pick-me-up snacks, nutritionists say. Nuts such as almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, and hazelnuts are all loaded with magnesium, a mineral whose health benefits include improving heart health, decreasing the risk of diabetes, reducing stress, improving muscle functioning, and reducing insomnia.

Another super snack food is dark

*There is more
wisdom in your
body than in
your deepest
philosophies.
~Friedrich
Nietzsche*



You know you're supposed to get your eight hours!

Be Snack Smart

Strategic snacking can be a good way to smooth out dips in your energy level and avoid hunger cravings that can lead you to overeat when you finally do sit down to a full meal. So go ahead and snack. Just be as choosy in your snack selection as you are in meal planning.

chocolate, which is rich in heart-protecting antioxidants and can improve blood flow, which will energize flagging muscles. Even milk chocolate gets a thumbs up because it provides calcium for the bones. So enjoy it--in moderation.

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Don't fall for the fiction that all

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Stay Hydrated

Just because you're not thirsty does not mean you aren't dehydrated, and even slight dehydration can leave you tired and lethargic. The answer is, of course, to drink plenty of water. If the taste of plain water doesn't excite you, consider some of the flavored varieties, keeping in mind that loads of extra sugar should be avoided.

One increasingly popular healthy hydration alternative is coconut water, which studies suggest may hydrate more quickly than plain H₂O and which contains more potassium and less sodium than other energy drinks.

Massage and More

The inherent demands of your life may lead to muscle strains, stress, and other conditions that can affect your energy levels. One of the best strategies is to get into a regular pattern of receiving massage. If you feel the need for some quick bodywork between sessions, consider self-massage possibilities.

One option is to use a foam roller, a firm foam log that comes in varying thicknesses--think of them as comfy rolling pins. You can use your own body weight to generate direct pressure as you roll over the roller, working out muscle knots.

Aromatherapy is also a great way to get a quick energy boost, as certain scents are able to fight fatigue. Queen among them is peppermint, and other lethargy busters include eucalyptus, citrus, cardamom, and even cinnamon and black pepper.

Get Some Rest

The number one myth about sleep is that you can get by on six hours a night. The truth is that the further away you deviate from getting eight hours sleep a night--and some people get too much, not too little--the greater the risk of cardiovascular disease, depression, obesity, and a host of other maladies.

Make sleep a priority. Get on a regular schedule, stick to it, and stop allotting to sleep only whatever time is left over after everything else gets accomplished. Once you've gone to bed, though, you have to actually go to sleep, and for many people that's no easy feat.

Caffeine is often the culprit. Caffeine is a great pick-me-up first thing in the morning, but it has a six- to seven-hour "half-life," meaning that half the caffeine in that cup of coffee you consumed to ward off the 3:00 p.m. doldrums will still be lingering in your bloodstream after the 10:00 p.m. news.

Another stimulant many people don't often consider is light--particularly light from a computer or television screen. Dim light from a soft reading lamp is fine, but the bright blue light of electronic devices sears itself into our minds and fools them into thinking it's still daylight outside, which makes falling asleep seem unnatural.

Heat, whether internal or external, will also disrupt sleep. The ideal room temperature for sleeping is around 65 degrees. The cool air then wicks away heat from your body, which allows you to fall asleep. Anything you do to

increase your body's core temperature, like exercising or eating a big meal right before bedtime, makes it harder for your body to cool down to a comfortable sleeping temperature.

Naps are tricky luxuries. Taken wisely and in moderation, they'll restore mental alertness and fuel you through a long afternoon. But too long a nap or a poorly-timed nap will leave you feeling drained after you get up, and will make it harder to fall asleep come bedtime. Timing also matters. Grab a morning nap to boost your creativity and mental alertness or a late-afternoon nap to restore lost physical energy and boost your immune system--a nap around noon provides a little of both.

Rebecca Jones is a Denver-based freelance writer.



Snack smart and benefit from sustained energy throughout the day.

Be Smart with Smartphones

Tips for Avoiding Injury

Have you ever noticed that your neck gets cranky after an extended Angry Birds binge? Or your thumb starts to throb the day after sending 40 emails from your phone during a particularly boring meeting? With more people spending more time on their smartphones, stories of repetitive strain injuries like these are on the rise.

Certified Hellerwork practitioner and licensed massage therapist Joseph Hunton has seen, and experienced, the results of overuse and improper ergonomics when it comes to these devices. "I had been sitting and standing with my head bent over the phone while holding it and making fine finger movements for hours at a time," Hunton says of the days that followed the arrival of his new smartphone. "This was a recipe for strain and pain."

Being Smart

Hunton encourages smartphone users to stretch and take frequent breaks, and cautions that improper use may result in

a stiff neck, sore upper back, and tight arms. Here are some more smartphone ergonomic tips to avoid the pain:

- Bring the phone up to your line of sight to keep your head aligned with your spine.
- Use a wireless headset to prevent arm strain.
- Never hold the phone between your head and shoulder.

Frequent smartphone use can also cause repetitive strain injuries of the thumb. Hunton reminds us to use our smartphones intelligently. "Although it can perform many functions, it is not really a computer, gaming station, or video monitor," he says.

Options for Relief

Stretching, limiting your smartphone use, and receiving frequent massage are all successful ways to alleviate the strain caused by repetitive use. Listen to your body, and communicate with your massage therapist about any pain or

discomfort that might arise from the use of these devices.



Follow these guidelines to stay pain-free.

The Scoop on Meditation

A Simple Practice with Profound Benefits

People who meditate regularly appear internally and externally five to 10 years younger than their non-meditating peers, according to author Deepak Chopra. That's good news for the estimated 10 million people who practice meditation on an ongoing basis and experience the resulting calm it cultivates.

The rich benefits come from doing something that looks like nothing: Sitting still, being quiet, and breathing deeply. Meditation works simply but profoundly by defusing the onslaughts of life -- a racing mind, busyness, deadlines, commutes, all of which have physiological effects on well-being. Meditation calms the nervous system, decreases metabolic rate, heart rate, and blood pressure, and lowers levels of cholesterol, stress hormones, and free

radicals. It also has a direct effect on breathing, slowing and deepening respiration so more oxygen circulates throughout the body. Not only that, meditation is said to lessen feelings of anxiety and depression and improve memory and concentration. And all of this culminates in slowing the aging process, as Chopra notes.

There are many meditation techniques, including focusing on a mantra, a sacred word or phrase, or your breath. But the basic intent of all meditation is focus and attention. And it doesn't take hours a day in an ashram to meditate effectively. Benefits kick in with even a short period of devoted time.

How to begin? Wear comfortable, unrestrictive clothes, sit on a cushion or chair with your back straight (think once

again, comfort), rest your hands on your legs, let your eyes go soft and out of focus or close them, breathe slowly and deeply, and -- the hardest part -- attempt to empty your mind of thoughts and quiet the internal dialogue. When thoughts flit through your mind, let them pass without judging them and come back to your focus (your mantra, counting, etc.) and breathing.

Start with this sitting meditation technique for five minutes a day, and add on time as you get more at ease with the process. For more information on techniques and benefits, check out www.abc-of-meditation.com.

*To keep the body
in good health is
a duty,
otherwise we
shall not be able
to keep our
mind strong and
clear.
~Buddha*

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- * Buy 5 sessions and get the 6th one free!

Love your body and treat it with the utmost respect. It is a marvelous creation!

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