

What's sapping your

Ramp up your chi and put a spring in your step with this holistic guide from nutritionist **Elizabeth Montgomery**

ENERGY?

Do you struggle with maintaining your energy levels throughout the day? Or find it hard to get out of bed in the morning? It's hardly surprising – the stresses of daily life can be very demanding. Living an on-the go lifestyle often results in an eventual burn out. Many people find themselves reaching for popular pick-me-up snacks and drinks, and wondering why the effects are only short term. The good news is, there are many things we can do to improve and maintain our energy levels. For long term success, a holistic approach is required which entails dietary and lifestyle adjustments.

Let's look at some of the common causes of low energy...

X POOR DIETARY CHOICES

Our bodies were not designed to consume what most Westerners currently consider food. This includes most animal products, glutinous grains, processed foods, coffee, fizzy drinks, alcohol – the list goes on. In fact, most forms of modern eating count as 'dis-ordered overeating', which creates a huge demand on the body's energy reserves. Furthermore, never before in our evolutionary history has the human body been subjected to such high amounts of sugar. Eating lots of the white stuff creates ongoing stress for the pancreas causing it to release high levels of insulin (the hormone needed to regulate glucose), which is needed to lower blood sugar levels by pushing sugar out into the cells. This is what creates the high/low energy crash cycle after eating sweets, leading on to even more sweet cravings. A high level of sugar also places stress on the adrenals (the glands on top of the kidneys). In response to the spike in blood sugar they release fight-or-flight hormones. This is damaging because over time, it can lead to a common condition called adrenal exhaustion which gives rise to a host of uncomfortable

symptoms such as fatigue, feeling anxious, mood swings, and sugar cravings.

Another diet-related energy depleter worth mentioning is candida, a fungus that belongs to the yeast family. When your body is healthy, it maintains small amounts of this fungus in the digestive tract. Unfortunately, poor dietary habits can cause candida growth to spiral out of control. When this happens, it is able to grow outside of the digestive tract, take hold and proliferate elsewhere in the body. This very problematic overgrowth causes a myriad of troubling health symptoms and can be a major cause of fatigue.

X STRESS

Most people feel some degree of stress on a daily basis. Busy, multi-tasking lifestyles mean it's hard to find enough time for adequate mealtimes, rest and relaxation. Unfortunately, overstimulating recreational activities have now become the social norm. Watching TV or spending hours engaging on social media may be enjoyable, but it's actually stimulating the delicate adrenals to produce even more flight-or-flight hormones.

There are the four major types of stress:

- **Physical:** lack of sleep, intense physical exertion, poor nutrition
- **Mental:** worry, anxiety, perfectionism
- **Emotional:** fear, anger, guilt, shame
- **Psycho-spiritual:** life challenges, difficult relationships, lack of spiritual alignment

According to traditional Chinese medicine, the kidneys and adrenal glands are the centre of the body's precious life force known as jing energy. Jing is seen as our primordial life force which determines our overall sense of vitality and longevity. When we live in such a way that depletes our Jing energy, then health issues

such as adrenal exhaustion, lack of sex drive and rapid ageing, among other issues, will eventually ensue.

X LACK OF EXERCISE

Our bodies were designed to work and move all day long. Our ancestors spent the majority of the day outside working and searching for food. Unfortunately, what's known as modern convenience now equates with living a sedentary existence. Too little exercise will eventually impair multiple physical functions necessary for health. Think of the body as a car that requires fuel from food and water, and plenty of exercise to fire up the engine.

Your Body | GET ENERGISED

Key tips for lasting energy

✓ NOURISH YOUR BODY

- When it comes to sustaining energy, skipping breakfast is not an option. Having a good breakfast is key for balancing blood sugar. Aim to include a protein component to help slow down the glycemic response (sugar release) in the body. Say goodbye to those sugary cereals!
- Make certain all meals and snacks include some good quality protein to prevent blood sugar dips (think nuts, seeds, pulses or goat's cheese).

Hemp powder and rice protein powder are the new kids on the block and make great protein additions to smoothies, soups and drinks.

- Aim for a variety of organic alkalising seasonal vegetables with plenty of greens. Most non-starchy vegetables give nourishment without creating blood sugar spikes (but be careful with eating starchy potatoes).
- Include raw foods in your diet. These are bursting with life force energy and enzymes, which are destroyed during the cooking process. Eating raw foods means the body doesn't have

to use a lot of energy to produce enzymes for the digestive process, resulting in more energy available for daily activities. A good way to introduce a raw component to your day is by having a green vegetable juice as snack. Green juices have a very low glycemic load and won't spike blood sugar levels. Add in key superfoods like chlorella or spirulina, and you'll get an additional protein boost.

✓ HYDRATE

Drink 6-8 glasses of pure water daily for fatigue prevention, hydration and adrenal health. Decrease the caffeine, bump out the alcohol (big adrenal stressors) and go for vegetable juices (fruit juices spike blood sugar) and calming herbal teas instead.

✓ EXERCISE

As little as 30 minutes, four times a week can add years to your life. Try power walking in nature, yoga, dancing or interval training. It doesn't matter so long as you move your body and enjoy it!

✓ MEDITATE

A good way to take stress off the adrenals and the body/mind/spirit complex is to find time to meditate on a daily basis. The body and breath are very interconnected, and when we meditate on gentle rhythmic breathing for as little as 10 minutes a day, it can have profound effects on stress reduction and our overall well-being.

TRY THIS SIMPLE 10-MINUTE MEDITATION:

- Sit comfortably with your legs uncrossed and spine straight
- Take a few deep breaths, in and out, then slowly adjust the breath to a gentle rhythmic manner
- Simply focus on the air passing in and out of the tip of your nose. Keep your attention on the gentleness of the in-breath, and sensation at the end of your nose
- When you find your mind wandering, just gently bring it back to the breathing, in and out of the tip of your nose. Try this for 10 minutes a day, and notice a sense of calm and difference in how you feel as you go about the day.