

How To Turbocharge Your Energy Bank Without Caffeine from Day One

Nancy's jaded eyes blink as she stares at the computer screen...

I desperately need a lie-in for an hour she tells herself.

But there's no chance for that, as she has to finish the report for the meeting lined up later in the afternoon.

Then there's the after work meal.Plus loads of housework.

Yet she's tired and it is only 1.30pm in the afternoon.

What can she do?

Staying energized and focused after an early start is challenging most times.

And drinking more coffee or snacking on chocolate bars isn't the right solution.

But, don't worry. I'll show you how to gain extra energy to face the rest of your day with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

Without caffeine or chocolate.

Ready to get started?

The causes of afternoon tiredness and lethargy

Lona Sandon RDMEd, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association, suggests our body has a natural rhythm. Our bodies set a clock so most people tend to feel sleepy around 2or 3 pm

This is why some cultures have siestas.Employees take a long afternoon break and then resume their work later in the day.

Midday sleepiness is like a miniature version of the drowsiness you feel at bedtime according to sleep expert Michael J Berus Ph.D. author of the beauty of sleep.

According to Berus, "It has to do with a dip in your core body temperature," he suggests "before you go to sleep, your core body temperature begins to drop, a signal to the brain to release Melatonin".

Melatonin is a hormone which makes you feel sleepy. Melatonin is released late evening and on a minimal scale between 2 and 4 pm too.

What you have for breakfast matters.

What do you eat in the morning?

Your eating habit can cause you to feel sleepy too.

Most people don't eat enough in the morning.

Do you have a quick cup of coffee or tea for breakfast? Or perhaps a French bun? This doesn't give you enough fuel for your day.

So what should you have for breakfast?

Start your day with a breakfast containing eggs and whole grains. This gives you a good boost of protein and fiber.

And, a good combination of carbohydrates and protein will give fuels to the brain and muscles. So you can focus on your work.

According to Sandon, most women should eat 300 to 400 calories for breakfast and most men about 500. She recommends the following

- A bowl of cereal with skimmed milk and a glass of juice or piece of fresh fruit.

- Two slices of toast with peanut butter and a banana

- An English muffin topped with scrambled egg and a slice of low-fat cheese

And what about lunch?

Avoid eating heavy foods, which will sit on your stomach and take time to digest. These heavy foods can make you tired as well.

Instead, try eating vegetables with diced eggs, beans or chickpeas, turkey breast or cubed chicken to give you a protein fix. You can even smear some peanut butter on your celery sticks.

The best power snacks to boost focus

Finding yourself hungry in the afternoon?

Try a power snack. A power snack can also help you maintain focus.

Avoid a bar of chocolate and a can of caffeine. Instead, try a carb-protein combo—just like a healthy breakfast or lunch.

Sandon recommends having some fresh fruit, trail mix with nuts or whole-wheat crackers. Nutritious fruits include apples and bananas which are a good source of vitamin c, minerals, and carbs. These give you a good boost of energy too.

The best defence against tiredness?

Do you know 10mins of walking up and down the stairs at regular pace makes you feel more energized than 50mg of caffeine?

50mg of caffeine is roughly what you get in one can of soda like coke.

This was discovered in a study carried out by the UGA College of Education University of Georgia and published in the Journal of Psychology and Behaviour Researchers studied typical office workers who spent hours sitting and not having enough time for long sessions in the gym.

During the study, participants either took caffeine capsules or a placebo. They also walked up and down stairs for 10mins at a low-intensity pace.

The study found that a placebo and caffeine didn't impact energy levels. However, after exercise, participants felt more energetic and vigorous (no matter whether they took caffeine or not). They also felt more motivated to work.

So instead of drinking more caffeine when you are feeling tired, try going up and down the stairs in a steady manner for 10 minutes.

That's how you get piles of work done in the afternoon.

Should you nap?

A 15-20min power might be the best cure for your afternoon tiredness

According to Dr. Fiona Kerr, a neuro specialist at the University of Adelaide, our bodies are built for two sleeps a day.

So, It is normal to feel sleepy. According to Kerr, the homeostatic sleep drive and circadian arousal pull us in different directions. Circadian arousal makes us stay awake while our sleep drive makes us fall asleep. These two rhythms create a nap zone in the middle of the day as our circadian arousal relaxes and our homeostatic sleep drive makes us sleep.

Lack of sleep affects how creative you are as well affect your focus.so having a power nap for 15mins(not more than 20mins) improves your cognitive function, memory alertness, and stamina. Plus your mood too. It'll also ramp up your creativity and help reduce your stress level.

I have a power nap of 20mins every day. A routine I have stuck to since my university days.

And believe me, it does work.

A nap of 20 minutes is more beneficial than sleeping for an extra 20minutes in the morning says, Kerr.

A little-known way to boost energy

How about spending some time in the sun?

Research shows that sunlight triggers your brain to release serotonin, which improves your mood. Serotonin also makes you feel more focused and calm.

Also, exposure to sunlight assists your body in reducing the production of excess melatonin, a hormone which makes you fall asleep.

The world health organization advises getting 5 to15mins of sunlight on your hands and feet at least two to three times a week. This is enough to trigger the Vitamin D boosting benefits of sunlight

What should you drink? And how much?

Dehydration affects how you focus and think at work.

Research also shows dehydration can hugely affect your short-term memory and attention. According to Joan Kett RD dietician for the Beverage Institute "think of water as a nutrient your body needs which is present in plain water, foods, and liquids."

So how much water should you drink a day?

Well, the WHO recommends 2.2litres for women and 2.5litres for men. You can also get your allowance from fruits and vegetables if you don't want to keep drinking water all day. For example one medium apple about 3 inches in diameter contains 5.5oz of water.

How office stretches can energize you for the rest of the day

Still feeling a bit of lethargy after sitting at your desks for hours?

Do a few exercises to get your blood flowing. Exercise delivers extra stimulus so you feel fighting fit for that demanding meeting. And get your reports written in a cinch.

Here are five stretching exercises you can easily do at your desk as recommended by celebrity doctor Josh Axe

1. Rubber Neck

Sit up tall and drop your right ear down towards your right shoulder (you don't have to touch it). Hold a few seconds. Then repeat for the left side.

2. Reach for the Stars

Interlace your fingers and reach towards the sky, as high as you can, keeping your palms facing up towards the ceiling

3. Look Around

Turn your head to the left and try and look over your shoulder and hold for a few seconds. Repeat on the right

4. Bubblehead

Drop your chin towards your chest and gently roll your head from side to side.

5. Shrugs

Raise both shoulders up towards your ears. Hold for a few seconds and release. Repeat a few times.

Breathe

Breathing exercises, help you relax and focus. They even help you think properly and energize you too.

Here is a breathing exercise recommended by Tanc Sade Free Diving Champion who recently broke a national record with a 218meter swim.

On a single breath.

The exercise involves deep and shallow breathing.

Sit up in your chair. Place one hand on your chest and take a deep breath into your hand. Now place the same hand at your stomach base and take a deep breath. Focus on getting your stomach to push your hand up while your chest remains still. Repeat for 6 to 8 breaths. Then combine the chest and belly breaths together.

Tap into your natural sources of renewable energy

Next time tiredness creeps into you, imagine your deep reservoirs of vibrant new energy.

Pick one of the tips from above, and see where it takes you.

You'll be amazed at the results.

Renewed fitness. Razor sharp focus. All day.