“Help! I’m tired all the time!”

Often feel sluggish and tired? Wish you had more get-up-and-go? Our experts share the easy ways to beat fatigue and boost your energy!

1 Refill your “energy bucket”!
ARC out your plan!

First off, know that you’re not alone! “As a doctor, I used to start out physical exams asking the open-ended question, ‘How are you feeling?’ But now I start with: ‘How is your energy?’” observes women’s health expert Holly Phillips, M.D. “More often than not, my patients—mostly women—are going through the motions of everyday life truly exhausted.” So what can you do about it? “ARC out your plan,” suggests energy expert Linda Hawes Clever, M.D. “A stands for Awareness. Sometimes the reason you’re tired is obvious—it’s late in the day or you’ve been exerting yourself. But more often, it’s not that clear. So ask yourself, ‘Have I been taking care of myself lately? Am I saying yes to too many commitments?’ Next, R stands for Reflect, which means think about solutions. If boredom is sapping your energy, and you used to, perhaps, paint, block off time to paint and help refill your energy bucket. Last, C signals Conversation: Talk with your friends to see what ways you can boost your energy together—they’re probably feeling just as tired as you are! Consider, for example, starting a walking club—a fun way to get the fatigue-fighting exercise you need.”

Tweak your routine!

Do see a doctor to rule out medical conditions that can cause fatigue—anemia, thyroid disorders, fibromyalgia—which occur more often in women. That said, “most fatigue can be reversed just by tweaking simple lifestyle habits,” Dr. Phillips notes. “Try breathing deeply instead of shallowly, going to bed and waking up at about the same time every day and eating healthfully.” The easiest energizer of all? “Taking a break to meditate—sitting quietly, closing your eyes and focusing on your breathing—increases your energy almost instantly,” she says.

Let there be autumn light!
“Exposing yourself to natural light by sitting in a sunny window for a few minutes boosts your mood and alertness, especially as the days get shorter this fall and winter,” Dr. Phillips says. Try it for just five minutes in the morning, and you’ll have more energy all day!

2 Enjoy deep, restorative sleep!
Relax with a bath!
“A warm bath raises your body temperature, so when you climb out of the bath, your body cools down quickly,” says Dr. Phillips. “This mimics the drop in body temperature your brain triggers naturally when you’re getting ready to go to bed, thus helping you fall asleep more quickly.”

Read a romance in bed!
Did you know your dreams could be making you tired—even if you don’t remember them? “In one study, participants played a video game in which they were skiing right before bed,” says sleep expert Yatin J. Patel, M.D. “When they were woken up during REM sleep, it turns out, they were dreaming about skiing!” The upshot? “You dream about the last thing you do before bed, thus helping you fall asleep more quickly.”

Stressful dreams actually make you more tired when you wake up, so if the last thing you do before bed is, say, check work e-mail, you’re apt to wake up feeling tired! Instead, do something really relaxing right before going to bed, like reading a romance novel. Your dreams will be sweeter, and you’ll start the day with more energy!

Energy-revving nutrients!

B-12: “It converts the food you eat into energy,” Dr. Phillips says. B-12-rich foods include eggs, meat and fish. Prefer a supplement? Aim for between 2 and 2.8 mcg.

Magnesium: “The mineral plays a critical role in energy production.” Get it from fish, dark leafy greens, nuts and seeds or take a 300-mg supplement daily.

Omega-3 fatty acids: “Your brain is composed mostly of fatty acids, which is why getting lots of omega-3s in your diet—from salmon, tuna, sardines as well as soybeans, flaxseeds, walnuts and canola oil—can boost your mood and alertness.” Or take 1,200 mg. daily.

Our expert panel

Holly Phillips, M.D.—author of The Exhaustion Breakthrough—is the medical contributor for CBS News. She has also appeared on The Dr. Oz Show, The Doctors and many other programs.


Yatin J. Patel, M.D.—author of Deeper Sleep, Richer Life: Sleep Doc’s 200 Pearls for Females—is the medical director of Indiana University’s Goshen Center for Sleep Studies.

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