



7 ways to boost YOUR VITALITY

Feeling sluggish now the New Year festivities are over? Until someone invents a pep-up pill, we've come up with the next best thing – proven natural remedies for turning your lethargy to liveliness without any yawning gaps in-between

Breathe over breakfast

From commuting to conferences, school pick-ups to supermarket sweeps, we can all be run ragged with the breakneck pace of life – but sometimes it's what's going on inside rather than outside that counts. Poor eating habits and a torpid digestive system can have a big impact on our vitality. "Lack of stomach acid and digestive enzymes, inflammation, dysbiosis and intestinal permeability are all elements that result in fatigue," says Chloe Cunningham from corporate wellness group Health is Wealth (healthiswealthgroup.com). "So prep your own food – the sights and smells are the first signal to your digestive system that you are about to eat – and take a few deep breaths before you eat. When there are stress hormones circulating in your system, your digestive system effectively switches off. Pay attention to your food and you are much less likely to overeat – and once the digestive system is functioning optimally, it absorbs a much wider variety of nutrients and your body is in a much stronger position to be able to create energy."

Strike a pose

If your brain is on burnout mode, try a pick-me-up session of hatha yoga and mindfulness meditation. Doing these together has been found to significantly improve energy levels and brain function, according to a study by the University of Waterloo. Doing just 25 minutes per day can improve cognitive abilities such as focus and emotional control. It is thought this is due to the way the practice can release endorphins and increase blood flow.

Get a vitamin injection

Many of us have wished we had a magic wand to energise our afternoons, and vitamin injections and patches might be just the tonic. These allow essential nutrients to go straight into the bloodstream, rather than through the digestive tract, to get to the root of the problem more quickly. "Clients come to me saying they're tired and this is often linked to iron deficiency. Iron is needed to create haemoglobin, which is found in our red blood cells and helps carry oxygen, a vital source of energy, all around our body," says Bianca Estelle, founder of vitamininjections.co.uk. "It's not always possible to get the optimum amount of vitamins and minerals through our diets, which is where supplementation comes into play. For energy, I recommend B12 energy shots, or B Complex and D3 injections in order to enhance physical stamina and improve mental agility. Energy injections also combat cortisol overproduction, which can cause weight gain, high blood pressure, chronic skin conditions and illness."

Get on your bike

If you're fighting fatigue, a gym session might be the last thing you want to do. But, in fact, a wakey-wakey workout can boost energy rather than deplete it. "A lack of energy is a big factor in my clients not exercising – and they really don't believe me when I tell them that exercise will give them more energy!" says personal trainer Faye Pritchard at fayefitnesspt.com. "But once people start a training programme, they quickly realise that it was the lack of exercise that was making them lethargic and that exercising two to three times per week has actually given them more energy."

"One of my favourite exercises for an energy lift is cycling, as not only can you add a challenge with hills or an incline but you also get the boost from being outdoors. When the weather isn't great, a Spin class or indoor bike is a great alternative. However you do it, the extra oxygen you take in powers through your bloodstream, into your muscles and organs, and makes everything work more efficiently."

Pump up the protein

During the winter blues seasons it's easy to reach for the carbs and caffeine to boost flagging stamina – but in fact it's clever combos that can really power us up. We all know carbs give us energy but it's only when they are combined with protein-rich foods such as poultry, fish, eggs, seeds, beans and lentils that they can stabilise blood sugar – jump starting our energy and ditching the dips. "Instead of eating a banana as a snack, go for a couple of oatcakes with nut butter," says qualified nutritional therapist Shona Wilkinson, nutritionist at wileysfinest.co.uk. "And swap a white bread sandwich for a salad with tuna and avocado. These foods will also have a low glycaemic load, which means the rate at which the carbohydrates (including sugars) are broken down and absorbed is slower, and they will therefore support sustained energy."

Go fishing

We all know fatty fish oils are great for our heart, eyes and brains but they also play a role in our vim and vigour. "The University of Maryland Medical Centre has conducted studies on omega 3 and found being low in this nutrient can lead to fatigue, mood swings and depression," says Shona. "I would recommend taking a high-quality fish oil capsule which contains EPA and DHA, such as Wiley's Finest Peak EPA which has four times more omega 3 than regular strength fish oil."

Drink up

While late nights can lead to low energy levels, many cases of fatigue are due to dehydration rather than lack of sleep. Boot energy bars out the door and replace them with eight to 10 200ml glasses of water each day. Add a slice of lemon and you'll get a three-fold energy booster – vitamin C to control blood pressure, PH-balancing alkaline to fight infection, and detoxing juice to aid sluggish digestion.



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