



5 (mostly free) Ways to Increase your Energy Right Now

ENERGY: when we hear this word we all have some idea of what it means. But have you ever taken a minute or two to consider it a bit deeper? What exactly is energy? Where do we get it? How do we get more of it? Why does it matter?

Consider...

Energy...physical, mental and emotional energy is with us every minute, waking or sleeping, of our entire lives. It is our life force. It's what allows us to get out of bed every day and do what we need or want to do. It drives our bodies reparative, reconstructive and cleansing processes during sleep.

The way our muscles work (or don't), the way our brain functions, our health, our ability to be resilient, to parent, to work, recreate, to love....*all* require energy.

Energy comes in many different forms, all having their place in how we function on a daily basis. Giving us our abilities to *do* things, *be* things and *feel* things. Each form has its place for us, each is critical in its own way.

As humans, our energy levels are largely dependent on inputs; food, water, sleep, environmental (air, toxin levels, sunlight), possibly supplements, stress and relationships.

There are many, many ways to increase our energy levels or optimize the energy we already have.

Here are just a few (mostly) free, ways to start increasing your energy today!

What do you have to lose....except fatigue, moodiness, time with people you love, health...you get the idea.

1. Get Better Sleep

You may have heard more and more lately how incredibly important sleep can be for how we feel and perform on a daily basis. This can't be overstated. If you're feeling tired, run down, cranky, have low energy or maybe even can't lose those last 5 or 10 lbs you've been trying to get rid of, increasing the quality of your sleep is the #1 place to pay some attention. Notice, I didn't say "more" sleep, I'm talking about **better** sleep. There are quite a few things you can do right away, tonight, that could affect the quality of your sleep.

- **Make it dark!** I mean really dark. The can't-see-your-hand-in-front-of-your-face kind of dark. Blackout shades, blackout curtains (we have both), electrical tape over all the little LCD lights, alarm clock face down, phone face down in airplane mode (more on this later) or better yet, off. Every speck of light accounted for. This will go a long ways towards good quality sleep.
- **Kick out the pets and kids!** I know, I know....sleeping with Fido at your feet is one of life's great pleasures. Trust me...he's not doing your health and energy any favors when he snuggles up close and snores in your ear. Whether it's allergies (however slight) or just disturbances throughout the night (yes, dog farts count!), your pets will disturb your sleep whether you're aware of it or not. Kids too...the little ones can kick and snore as much or more than Fido.
- **Turn your phone to airplane mode!** You might be amazed at how effective this can be. EMFs (electromagnetic fields) can disturb circadian rhythm and brain waves. A "live" phone next to your head at night is a quick way to blow up your sleep patterns. Plus, the alarm works just fine in airplane mode!

- **Ease into your evening!** Before we had electric lights to keep use awake 24/7 we naturally started winding down as the sun set. Try and mimic this program as much as possible. Dim interior lights, especially cell phones, computer screen and TVs. Blue light emitted from these devices (as well as household lighting) can impede our bodies natural production of melatonin....the hormone responsible for ushering us into sleep. And **RELAX!**

- **Pay attention to what you consume and When!** Obviously caffeine isn't going to help your sleep. Try to not have any after 2 p.m....even earlier if you are very sensitive. Dinner timing can also mess with your sleep patterns. I find that if I eat within 90 minutes to an hour of bedtime my sleep suffers. Try and eat at least 2 hours (more if you can swing it) before bedtime and even go for a walk afterwards to speed up digestion and promote relaxation.

2. Eat Good Food

Nothing will kill energy levels faster (other than lack of good sleep) than eating crappy food. It doesn't even need to be Pop Tarts and a glass of OJ for breakfast. Do you regularly eat cereal? Toast? Oatmeal and yogurt thinking it's "healthy? How do you feel a couple hours after a breakfast like this? Are you finding yourself back at the coffee maker or craving a snack at 10:30 a.m.? Are you famished enough by lunchtime to pound down a sandwich or burger? How do you feel a couple hours after that? Dead tired and dragging by 3? Can't keep your eyes open or think straight? More coffee? Constantly craving snacks?

There's a (relatively) simple biological reason for this. Carbohydrates are a very fast burning energy source for your entire body, muscles, organs and brain. When you eat carbs you get a great boost of fast energy. Your body produces insulin to shuttle as much as is needed into your muscles and organs for energy requirements and the rest to fat cells to store for later use (most of us never get around to that "later use" part). When all the carbs are metabolized, burned or stored, your body panics and thinks it needs another shot...quickly....hence, cravings, snacks, more carbs or stimulants like caffeine to take up the slack.

It doesn't need to be this way. Try a little experiment; **for your breakfast tomorrow have a fresh salad with organic greens, some avocado and lots of different kinds of veggies, nuts...maybe some canned salmon** if you have it. If you're really adventurous try a Bulletproof coffee! <https://blog.bulletproof.com/6-common-questions-about-bulletproof-coffee/> Pay attention to how you feel in an hour or two. How's your energy? Do you have cravings?

As we've heard since we were kids..."breakfast is the most important meal of the day." This might be debatable but the fact that we can choose to eat different things for breakfast and how they affect our energy isn't. And breakfast isn't the only meal this applies to. **Eat fewer carbs, more veggies and more good quality fats for a week and see how you feel and perform!**

3. Get Moving!

I'm sure we're all aware of the many benefits of "working out". The ghosts of gym memberships past and present haunt many of us. Yes, "serious" workouts can and do have many benefits for our health and longevity as well as day to day performance but **you don't need to spend hours a week in a Crossfit box or your local Gold's pumping iron to reap the energy enhancing benefits of daily movement.**

- **Work in an office?** Take a 10 minute break every 90 minutes or so and walk around the block...rain or shine.
- **On the phone a lot?** Get a headset and pace around the office...preferably in front of an open window.
- **Stay at home parent?** Take the kids to the park but don't park yourself on the bench with your phone! Play tag with the little ones. Do a quick bodyweight circuit workout on the jungle gym.
- **Get that blood flowing!** A little movement a few times a day can add cumulative benefits to your health and energy levels over the course of time. It doesn't take much all at once....just a little here and there!

If you're all-in, the local Crossfit box will be happy to oblige your more "hard-core" tendencies but if you're at square one, don't worry about it. **Every new day is a new opportunity to move more!**

4. Watch out for Toxins

Life is a dirty business. In our modern world it's tough to get away from dirt, bacteria, chemicals and other toxins, nor should we completely. There is a definite benefit for our immune systems to allowing our kids (and ourselves) to get dirty. There's a difference though between garden soil under our fingernails or a little toe jam vs. mold, mildew and chemical toxins in our every day environment.

Depending on where you live in the country and the age of your house, mold can be a huge problem.

Breathing mold toxins on a daily basis can have serious deleterious effects on our health at a cellular level and not just our lungs. Our brain is extremely sensitive to these toxins and damage is cumulative over time.

- **Do a quick assessment of your house and property.** Use a flashlight. Check under sinks, in crawl spaces and basements, showers, ceilings beneath bathrooms, anywhere there is plumbing or condensation. Look for discoloration, pay attention to smells.

There are also home based tests you can get for a few dollars from your local hardware store or online.

- **If there's a problem there are remediation steps you can take immediately.** Commercially available cleaners and mold/mildew killing paint-on primers can help. Drying the area and keeping it dry will be important. If the issue is extensive or bad enough professional remediation services are available, although the cost will go up a good bit.

- **Chemical cleaners including laundry detergents can also be a source of irritations and allergies** and can rob us of quality sleep and keep our immune systems on high alert at all times...neither are good for our health and energy.

- Where you can, switch to more environmentally friendly versions of your favorite cleaning supplies. **It doesn't need to be expensive or "elitist"**. Check out Molly's Suds on <https://thrivemarket.com>

5. Meditate, Be Mindful, One Thing at a Time

Do you multitask? Do you try? How does that usually work out?

For lots of us multitasking, or at least attempting to, is an integral part of our every day lives.

Whether it's kids, pets, cooking, cleaning, answering emails, texting, keeping up with our social media accounts, work pressure or any of a million myriad things we "need" to get done every day, it would seem we have no other choice...right?

Well, despite what we may think, what multitasking generally accomplishes is getting a few things done but not very well. We are just not biologically designed to multitask. We are designed to focus on one thing at a time...despite what Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest would have us believe.

We are also designed to be easily distracted.

All this ends up fracturing our time and attention to the point where it drains our energy, frazzles our psyche, and generally stresses us out. And the things we need to get done rarely get done very well.

The alternative? Try focusing on one thing at a time! Schedule task periods throughout the day...periods of time that you will focus on one thing...maybe it's playing with your kids. Maybe it's work. Whatever...schedule these in hour or 90 minute chunks of time and in between give yourself 10-20 minutes of time to pull completely away from what you're doing and go outside and *move!*

Try the program above for a week...if you're super motivated, spend a few minutes each evening journaling about your experiences doing it. At the end of the week take a look back and see what you've accomplished and how it's turned out.

Mindfulness and meditation have recently become mainstream. Everyone from Oprah to your neighbor is meditating and practicing mindfulness.

Are you rolling your eyes yet?

There's a scientifically valid reason for this. **Plain and simple...it works.** No, it's not going to change who you are overnight but again, with consistent practice it can have profound results on your energy, health and state of mind.

Being in the moment means letting distractions fall away as they arise and focusing your attention on what is immediately before you. This is mindfulness. Lose your keys frequently? Forget where you parked your car at the mall? Can't remember your clients name when you greet them?

How much stress and aggravation does this cause? How much mental energy does it sap?

These are things a small bit of attention can go a long ways towards alleviating.

Formal meditation does not need to mean hours of sitting in an uncomfortable position listening to yourself breathe and trying not to think about anything.

There are lots of free phone or desktop apps to get you started. A 10-minute, guided session every morning is a great way to start your day and can have profound and lasting effects over time. Check out Headspace (they have an initial free trial period) or Insight Timer.

There's a reason many highly successful people list meditation as their number one most important daily practice.

Here's to more energy!



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