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THE GOOD
HEALTH
HANDBOOK

RECHARGE YOUR BODY'S BATTERIES

Permanently zonked? Over the next six pages, you'll find the latest tips and advice from top doctors and health gurus on the quickest and most effective ways to boost your energy levels

Feeling exhausted by everyday life is now so common that experts have named it 'functional fatigue'. Around 50% of us say we're tired all the time, 42% say a lack of energy has a negative impact on our lives, while nearly 25% complain of tiredness when we see our GPs, according to research – and with good reason. 'The body isn't designed to go at full speed the whole time and we pack so much into our lives nowadays – working longer hours, sleeping less and having busier weekends – that its energy stores often end up completely drained,' says Dr Nerina Ramlakhan, sleep and energy therapist at London's Capio Nightingale Hospital. Turn over to find out how tired you truly are, and discover the experts' best pick-me-up tricks. >

HOW NORMAL ARE YOUR ENERGY LEVELS?

The sad fact is, many of us are so used to feeling flat, we don't even recognise how drained we are. Take our quiz to gauge your vitality

1 Do you regularly feel tired at 11am?
a) Yes
b) Never
c) Only if I've slept badly

If you answered A, you need to look at why. 'Although you can feel groggy for up to two hours after waking – a condition called sleep inertia – by 11 am you should be feeling fully energised and alert,' says Dr Neil Stanley. 'If you're not, despite a good night's sleep, you need to investigate further.'

2 How do you feel after a 20-minute workout?
a) Raring to go and glowing
b) Completely shattered
c) I'm too tired to exercise

The ideal answer is A, but if you answered B, your adrenal glands could be under pressure. 'This can cause real tiredness, but de-stressing will help,' says Dr Shamim Daya from London's Wholistic Medical Centre. If you answered C, remember that exercise – even in small doses – will boost your energy levels overall.

3 How often do you reach for coffee, sugar or snacks during the day?
a) Never
b) Once, at about 3pm
c) More than twice

If you answered A, you're a saint. If you answered B, you're normal, as our energy levels generally dip around 3pm, so many of us reach for sugary snacks to wake us up. If you said C, you need to look at the



cause. 'Constantly requiring sugar or caffeine is a sign that you're unnaturally tired. Instead of feeding this, you should look at the potential reasons why,' says nutritional therapist and personal performance coach Chloe Tasch.

4 What's your mental state when you first wake in the morning?
a) Normally I'm looking forward to the day ahead
b) I can't wait until I can get back into bed
c) Flustered about everything I've got to do

The balanced energy answer is A. 'Not only does this show you're well rested, the more passionate and engaged you are in your day, the more energised you'll actually feel,' says Dr Ramlakhan. If you answered B, it's likely to be a sign you're physically tired and need more sleep. As for C: 'If you're drowning in mental chatter before you've even got up, you're too stressed and need to take some time out to calm yourself down,' adds Dr Ramlakhan.

5 Have you ever fallen asleep in these places?
a) The cinema
b) A moving car
c) A boring meeting

If you answered A or B, that's normal. 'If you enter a quiet, warm place with no stimulation, sleep will find you,' says Dr Stanley. If you answered C, though, you're abnormally tired. Falling asleep in inopportune places shows that your unconscious mind is overruling your conscious one. If this happens a lot and you don't know why, see your GP.

How to buy more energy

There are countless products on the market. We look into what works

Give these a go

Natural Greens Spirulina, £19.95, www.naturalgreens.co.uk. Spirulina has been shown to increase energy levels in endurance athletes.

Aromatherapy Associates Revive Bath Oil, £34.75, www.aromatherapyassociates.com. This is crammed with rosemary essential oil, known to help improve alertness.

Pharmaton capsules, £8.99, from chemists. These contain an energising blend of ginseng, vitamins and minerals for a fast pick-me-up.

Not worth trying

Energy drinks Studies at the University of Loughborough have found that they do indeed pep you up – but then you crash even harder about an hour later.

Energising chewing gum These are unlikely to contain enough active ingredients to work.

Detox foot patches While they claim to drain away fatigue-causing toxins from the body, independent analysis has shown no evidence of any toxins on the pads after use.