

FOODS THAT BOOST ENERGY

Everyone can feel they are a little lethargic from time to time. Our busy lives is often a factor. However there are many other possible medical reasons such as insomnia, low thyroid or iron levels, depression or even prescription medication such as beta blockers. In this article I will focus on foods that can boost your energy levels. However, if you suffer from severe lethargy or lack of energy on a regular basis, I would advise getting a health check with your GP to rule out any medical problem.

Factors that influence your energy levels

The key factors that ensure we have enough energy are sufficient sleep, a healthy diet, regular exercise and keeping stress to a minimum. Over the next four weeks my articles in the Topic will focus on the main factors that influence our energy levels. This week I will concentrate on foods that give us energy.

Food that give us energy

Our diet is probably the greatest influence on our wellbeing and alertness. You can find more information on healthy eating on www.whelehans.ie, but for this article I will concentrate on a few small diet changes that can give you more energy.

OATMEAL

Oatmeal is a low GI food which means it releases energy slowly. Therefore porridge is an ideal start to your day as you are less likely to get hungry before lunch and you should not have an energy lull. GI stands for Glycemic Index and is a measure of the impact of food on your blood sugar. Foods with a high GI will raise your body's blood sugar levels quickly; by contrast foods with a low GI will raise them more slowly and over a longer period. High GI foods such as sugary drinks, white bread or chips give you a fast rush of energy followed by an energy lull. You will get hungry quicker and want to eat more. Aim for foods that have a low or moderate GI count, such as oats, pulses and wholemeal varieties of bread and rice.

COFFEE

Limiting your coffee intake to two cups per day can be very beneficial for our energy levels. Coffee without sugar is calorie free. Coffee stimulates the mind and makes us more productive at work. It is important to drink plenty of water when drinking coffee as coffee is a mild diuretic and can leave you dehydrated. Drinking more than two cups of coffee per day is counterproductive as you end

up getting withdrawal symptoms, one of which include fatigue. The same is true when you drink too much tea.

BANANAS

Bananas are fat free. They are rich in Vitamin B6, potassium, vitamin C and Fibre. They are an ideal healthy snack if you have a sugar craving as they taste great and contain plenty of carbohydrates, the body's main source of energy. Other fruits such as grapes, apples and watermelon are also fat free energising snacks which are full of nutrients.

WATER

Staying hydrated is important to ensure all our nutrients are absorbed properly. Water also means we can release heat by sweating. Dehydration causes fatigue. In a climate like Ireland, we should aim to drink about 6 to 8 glasses of water per day (approx 1.2 litres) to stop us getting dehydrated. More is needed in hotter climates.

LUNCH

If you experience fatigue or a dip in energy after lunch, you may need to change what you eat for lunch. High-protein lunches appear to produce greater alertness and more focused attention, whereas lunches that are high in fat tend to lead to greater fatigue, sleepiness and distraction. Chicken, tuna, lean beef and eggs are examples of lunch options that are high in protein and low in fat.

KEEPING ALCOHOL IN MODERATION

Too much alcohol will reduce your energy levels. It robs your body of vital vitamins, especially B vitamins which play an important part of releasing energy from food. In excess, it causes high blood pressure and its diuretic action can dehydrate the body, causing tiredness and headache. Moderation is the key. A good tip is drinking a glass of water in between each alcoholic drink, it will not only reduce the risk of a hangover but it will keep your energy levels up.

B VITAMINS

Our body uses a variety of enzymes to break down food and convert it to energy. Many vitamins are needed for this process, particularly the B vitamins B1, B2, B3, B5 and B6. Therefore B vitamins are essential for energy release. Example of good sources of B vitamins include bananas, lentils, potatoes, beans, brewers yeast, egg yoke and yogurt. The B vitamins have many other roles in the body including ensuring a healthy central system and immune system, promoting metabolism and ensuring cell growth. Other nutrients which the body uses for energy release include Co-enzyme Q10, L-Carnitine, magnesium and iron.

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WHELEHANS ENERGY TONIC

There is no substitute for healthy eating to ensure you get the maximum amount of energy releasing nutrients. However, if you feel you need a pick me up, Whelehans Tonic can give you the energy boost you need. We make it up in store and it contains all the B vitamins and iron. These vitamins can be especially lacking in people who are not fond of fruit and vegetables.

Next week's health article in the Topic is on **Insomnia**.

Disclaimer: Please ensure you consult with your healthcare professional before making any changes recommended

For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans, log on to www.whelehans.ie or dial 04493 34591. You can also e-mail queries to info@whelehans.ie.