

Mood and Energy- Enhancing Naturally

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.

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**.

Food for thought

Our diet is probably the greatest influence on our wellbeing and alertness.



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.

Exercise

Exercise will help shake off any cobwebs and make you feel more energised. It has been proven to improve mood by stimulating “good mood” hormones in the brain such as serotonin.

Mistake 1 - Unrealistic Goals

We tend to be very impatient when it comes to exercise and losing weight. Unless your goal is to lose only a pound or two, it may take you a while to achieve your ideal healthy weight and your goals should reflect this fact. Having a weekly target will help keep you focused.

Mistake 2- Not doing something you enjoy

Do things you enjoy. Don't feel you need to do exercises that you don't enjoy. Pick something that you find fun e.g. swimming, rollerblading, skipping, cycling. Everyone is different so pick something that you enjoy. Many people find team sports or group activities such as spin classes, five-a-side soccer or tag rugby more enjoyable and a great way to meet new people.

Try music, for example, a mini MP3 player to listen to while jogging (not road jogging as this can endanger your life as you may not hear oncoming traffic or other dangers). People who exercise to music report exercising longer and more vigorously than those who don't.

Mistake 3 - Failing to plan

As Roy Keane famously said, “fail to prepare, prepare to fail”. If you do not plan your exercise regime you are less likely to keep it up. You should plan set days of the week that you will exercise and try to stick with these (no matter how tired you feel after work!)

Your plan should take account of your current fitness and a fitness level you would like to achieve. It should take into account the amount of free time you have, and any injuries or ailments you need to work around.

Even if you have very little time to exercise, even 10 minutes twice a day can make a difference.

Mistake 4 - No Exercise Variety

Varying your exercise will avoid boredom and will allow you to lose weight quicker and get fitter quicker. Varying your exercise allows more muscles are used and you will be stronger overall. For example, if you normally only run to exercise, why not break it up with a swim, a cycle or a pilates class



Mistake 5 – Doing it all alone

Find an exercise partner. People who exercise with a partner or group are more likely to stick with a regular routine. Involve family members and friends. You will be less likely to skip your workout if you know somebody else is counting on you.

Mistake 6 - No warm-up and cool-down

Warming up prepares your body for the activity and intensity of activity ahead and prevents injury. Cooling down help:

- Muscles get rid of waste (such as lactic acid).
- Decrease the heart rate slowly.
- Prevent blood pressure drops which cause dizziness or fainting.
- Re-circulate blood from working muscles to the rest of the body.
- Prevent post-workout stiffness or soreness.



An example is walking for 5 minutes before jogging or lifting very light weights as a warm-up for more strenuous lifting.

Mistake 7 - Training at the same intensity

This mistake typically takes one of two forms; training with too low an intensity all the time, or training with too high an intensity all the time.

Mistake 8 - Using improper technique

- Do some homework - find out what the right technique is
- NHS website has good advice)
- Get help from a professional (such as a trainer or coach)
- Check your technique periodically to make sure everything's as it should be



Staff at your local gym can give excellent advice on your exercise regime and techniques

Mistake 9 - Not rewarding yourself

Set yourself weekly exercise goals and reward yourself at the end of the week if you have achieved these. Rewards could include a new book or magazine, a cinema trip, new clothes, new makeup or a massage.

Mistake 10 - Not resting enough

Rest has a vital role to play in life and in exercise, and getting the mix of activity and rest right is vital in both.

Common signs of over-training include:

- Injury.
- Irritation.
- Insomnia.
- Fatigue.
- Disinterest in exercise.

Sleep

Ensuring you are getting enough sleep may sound obvious but many Irish people are not getting sufficient sleep. Many people can not get enough sleep for medical reasons, with about 40,000 Irish people suffering from chronic insomnia. However, for many of us, not getting enough sleep can be quite simply due to not going to bed in time. Sleep requirements vary from person to person, and it varies from 6 to 9 hours. However, most people need up to 8 hours sleep.



Could a medical condition be causing tiredness?

If you are experiencing overwhelming or persistent tiredness, blood tests may need to be done to rule out other conditions such as anaemia (low iron), haemochromatosis (too much iron), under active thyroid and liver and kidney problems. Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is another possibility.



What is depression?

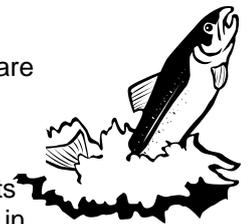
Feeling sad or "depressed" happens to everyone from time to time. The sensation passes quickly for most people.



However, for a person with clinical depression, the low feeling lasts for a longer period of time and can interfere with their daily life. Depression is caused by an imbalance of chemicals in the brain. These chemicals include serotonin and noradrenalin which are involved in mood. The reason why certain people develop depression is not fully understood but there is a genetic influence, meaning that it tends to run in families. Stressful life events such as a bereavement of someone close, relationship breakdowns, etc can trigger depression. Alcohol and certain drugs can also trigger depression.

Fish oils and the benefit to depression

Evidence shows omega 3 fatty acids reduce depression and anxiety. Omega 3 fatty acids are primarily found in oily fish such as salmon, fresh tuna, mackerel, herring and sardines. We should eat two portions of fish per week, one of them oily.

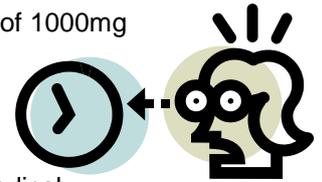


A 2005 study² published in the European Journal of Clinical investigation compared patients with and without omega 3 supplements. The study showed the mood profile was improved in those taking omega 3's and they experienced increased vigour and reduced anger, anxiety and depression states.

Omega 3 enhances serotonin in the brain to boost mood. In Japan, where people eat on average 70kg of fish a year, the rate of depression is 0.12%. Whereas in New Zealand, where people eat only 18kg of fish a year, the rate of depression is 50 times higher.

A 2008 study in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry showed that PlusEPA[®] is as effective as Prozac[®] in reducing the symptoms of depression. When PlusEPA[®] was used in combination with anti-depressants; results were enhanced effectiveness of the anti-

depressant. PlusEPA® is a 95% concentration of omega 3 containing a daily dose of 1000mg of EPA designed for emotional health.



Reducing Anxiety

The research data gathered in the 2011 University of Ohio study from university medical students who were given supplements of omega 3 showed a significant reduction in anxiety among the students. Those receiving the omega-3 showed a 20% reduction in anxiety compared to those that did not

Omega 3 is a natural anti-Inflammatory. Inflammation is a natural immune response that helps the body heal, but it also can play a harmful role in a host of diseases ranging from arthritis to heart disease to cancer

Omega 3 increases mental alertness in students

A 2008 Study¹ from the Journal of Psychopharmacology shows that MorEPA®, a high concentration fish oil supplement, can help to produce greater mental effort in students.

Psychologists and psychiatrists considered the impact of a short-term supplement of MorEPA® on the processing of “emotional information”. The study was done on healthy students.



Using a series of tests, the group using the MorEPA® showed a greater level of mental alertness including a greater problem solving ability. This shows how MorEPA® can be of benefit to those studying for exams and engaging in other mentally taxing activities. Researchers in this trial concluded from their finding that MorEPA® is likely to improve the decision making capacity of people suffering from depression. This conclusion comes from the fact that depression reduces the decision making capacity of those suffering from it.

1. Antypa N, Van der Does AJ, Smelt AH, Rogers RD. Omega-3 fatty acids (fish-oil) and depression-related cognition in healthy volunteers. Journal of Psychopharmacology. 2008 Jun 26.
2. Fontani et al. Cognitive and physiological effects of Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid supplementation in healthy subjects. European Journal of Clinical investigation. 35: 691- 699 2005