

"I finally feel like

Doctors recommended all kinds of treatments to help Alesandra Rain, 55, ease her chronic exhaustion and pain. But nothing helped—until she discovered the shocking cause and a simple fix

Alesandra Rain,
Los Angeles

"Yeah, right..." Alesandra grumbled, swatting at her screaming alarm clock and shoving it into her nightstand drawer before burrowing back under her blankets. "I'd always enjoyed the 7 AM walks I shared with two friends, but increasingly, I found myself skipping the workout in favor of an extra 30 minutes of sleep," Alesandra recalls. "I reasoned that I was just a bit run-down. But on that morning, when I finally lifted my head from the pillow and pulled the clock out of the drawer, I was shocked to see it was past 10. That's when I started to worry, *What's going on with me?*

Barely getting by

"Ten years ago, while I was coping with a difficult divorce and recovering from a serious auto accident, I became routinely exhausted yet unable to get a decent night's sleep. Even with the use of a sleeping aid, I found myself becoming more and more sluggish. And though I'd always thought of myself as an 'I'll get through it' kind of person, this lethargy was different from any I had known before. At times I was so drained, I felt as if my muscles and bones weren't strong enough to keep me upright.

"Dishes remained in the sink, the beds unmade and friends, relatives and deadlines all fell by the wayside. I didn't care to pick up the phone, place a call or make any plans. And it wasn't just that I was tired. I was also dealing with body aches and brain

One-minute QUIZ

ARE YOUR CELLULAR "ENERGY ENGINES" OUT OF GAS?

If you're tired all day, you likely have at least some degree of mitochondrial dysfunction.

Other symptoms of the condition include:

- ✓ Body aches
- ✓ Listlessness
- ✓ Brain fog
- ✓ Unexplained weight gain
- ✓ Muscle spasms
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Insomnia
- ✓ Inordinate exhaustion during or after exercise

me again!"

fog, which permeated every aspect of my day.

"When my sister Jeanne surprised me with a visit one evening, she couldn't hide her shock as I opened the front door: I had dirty hair, not a stitch of makeup on, a ratty old robe and even rattier old slippers. In fact, I fully intended to wear those slippers to the restaurant that Jeanne was forcing me to go to with her—but that's where she drew the line.

"Like everyone else I knew, Jeanne was growing increasingly concerned about my uncharacteristic lethargy. She suggested, in the most tactful and gentle way possible, that I 'get help.' But I'd already seen several specialists who had diagnosed me with everything from fibromyalgia to a nerve disorder. With each diagnosis came a different recommendation—I was offered sleeping pills, muscle relaxers, painkillers. But when I didn't start to feel better, I was left wondering whether any of the doctors had actually made the right diagnosis.

Energized and alive

"While seeking answers online, I came across a condition I'd never heard of: *mitochondrial dysfunction*. I learned that stress, exposure to toxins and lack of sleep could deplete key nutrients

from the mitochondria—the 'energy engines' inside every cell of the body. The result? Fatigue, aches and brain fog.

"Although this certainly sounded like me, my first thought was, *Could this be the answer?* All my doctors were considered the 'best,' so wouldn't they have clued me in to this 'mito-whatever-it-is'?"

"My second thought, however, was, *What do I have to lose?* So I started the recommended regimen, supplementing daily with 400 mg of CoQ10, a nutrient that protects and heals the mitochondria. And every morning, I ate yogurt mixed with 4 to 5 Tbs of bioactive whey isolate powder—a protein precursor to the energy-boosting antioxidant *glutathione*.

"To my astonishment, with these simple changes I began to feel more energetic and alive in just two weeks. I watched in awe as my tired, damaged body came back to life.

"Today, at 55, my energy and passion for life are limitless. In fact, my health saga inspired me to cofound Point of Return (PointOfReturn.org), a non-profit organization focused on natural health and healing. And even though I work long, crazy hours, I'm thriving. Instead of burying my alarm clock, I bound out of bed before it even goes off and zoom through my day!"

—as told to Hallie Potocki

Alert! Does exercise make YOU sick?

Women who feel ill or completely wiped out a day or two after exercising often chalk it up to an extra-hard workout. But this is actually a hallmark symptom of mitochondrial dysfunction, which occurs when stress, lack of sleep or illness overtax the mitochondria, impeding them from making energizing ATP.

The body requires ATP to recover from the physical strain of exercise, explains Jill Carnahan, M.D. Without enough ATP, the body's energy stores remain empty, and extreme fatigue, brain fog and body aches can set in during or up to two days after working out.

If this applies to you, try the steps at right, which can help revitalize mitochondria within two weeks. In the meantime, limit your workouts to low-impact activities like walking or yoga to avoid further draining the mitochondria.

THE #1 CAUSE OF EXTREME FATIGUE

! "All low energy stems from mitochondrial dysfunction," asserts Jill Carnahan, M.D., an integrative physician in Boulder, Colorado. But doctors often write off the fatigue, which is accompanied by brain fog, headaches and muscle twitches, as a normal sign of aging. As a result, most sufferers aren't properly treated.

! Top triggers: lack of sleep, stress, hormonal imbalances and nutrient deficiencies, says David Katz, M.D., director of the Yale University Prevention Research Center. He explains that mitochondria (the "energy engines" within cells) generate *adenosine triphosphate* (ATP), the body's main source of fuel. But when the triggers above cause the mitochondria to burn out, they can't make enough energizing ATP.

✓ To diagnose the condition, doctors look for clues like fatigue, nutritional shortfalls and exhaustion during or after exercise. But if you're chronically tired, consider trying the steps below. If you have mitochondrial dysfunction, you should feel more energized within two weeks.

😊 Supplements can drastically boost energy. Each day, Dr. Carnahan suggests taking 5 grams of D-ribose, a sugar the body uses to make ATP (try Corvalen 280G, \$46 for 56 servings, at DouglasLabs.com). Also take a mitochondrial support supplement containing CoQ10, glutathione, alpha-lipoic acid, acetyl-L-carnitine, magnesium and vitamins B, C and E. One to try: Metagenics Mitochondrial Resuscitate (\$53 for 60 tablets, at amazon.com).

😊 Eating magnesium-rich foods can help. Magnesium helps mitochondria convert glucose into ATP. But stress saps nutrient stores, causing fatigue-inducing shortfalls. Aim to get 320 mg a day from foods like bananas, black beans, spinach and chocolate.