

boost

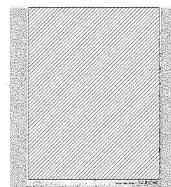
health,
motivation
& energy



More Power to You!

Want to get your mojo rising? You're not alone. More than 50 percent of American women report that they simply don't have enough juice, with 29 percent of us dragging tail several times a week, according to the American Psychological Association. No wonder the promise of a quick fix—like the kind that comes in a skinny colorful can—is tempting on crazy-busy days. But reaching for stimulants like sugar and caffeine when you're running on empty only leaves you jittery and then exhausted, says Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., the author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic!* For calm energy that gives you mental clarity and makes you feel good, you need to fill your tank. Here are eight healthy boosters that help you do just that. →

By Hallie Levine



Become a micromanager.

Of energy, that is. Take a cue from tennis champs like Serena Williams: They are superfocused when hitting the ball but use their “between point” time as a quick mental and physical time-out. “As soon as they step back and take a few deep breaths, their heart rate comes down, they detach from the moment, and they clear their head, making themselves ready for their next shot,” explains Jack Groppe, Ph.D., a cofounder of Johnson & Johnson’s Human Performance Institute in Orlando, Florida, which teaches athletes and leaders to be more productive and successful. The same tactic works on the job, he says. Employees who break for a microburst of activity every hour—like walking over to chat with a coworker or running out to grab lunch with a friend—have more energy, particularly in the afternoon, and are also more focused and motivated, the institute’s research shows. “This strategy forces you to disengage from whatever you’ve been doing, so you can be refreshed when you get back to it,” Groppe explains. Bonus: Physical activity also relaxes tight muscles and increases oxygen to your tired brain, while the camaraderie provides social support, which, in turn, helps relieve stress.

Ditch the cavewoman routine.

The paleo diet is all the rage, but it can contribute to fatigue by restricting carbs in your diet, says Rebecca Solomon, R.D., the director of clinical nutrition at Mount Sinai Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City. If eating like a hunter-gatherer has left you feeling downright prehistoric, add back some grains, but focus on the nutrient-rich whole ones such as amaranth, brown rice, quinoa,

millet and spelt, Solomon says. By choosing carbs that are low on the glycemic index, you’ll keep your blood sugar level steady so you won’t experience energy highs and lows. Try a puffed millet cereal for breakfast, spelt bread with lunch and quinoa with dinner.

Find your sweat sweet spot.

A brisk four-mile walk or a bike ride is great for upping your oomph. A 7-mile tempo run? Not so much. “You get higher levels of energy-producing, mood-elevating neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin when you do moderate instead of intense exercise,” explains Cedric Bryant, Ph.D., the chief science officer for the American Council on Exercise. In fact, a University of Georgia study found that those who exercised at a low to moderate intensity reported more energy than couch potatoes, and it was the low-intensity group who improved the most. “The best exertion level is where you’re breathing a little bit heavier but not totally out of breath,” Bryant says. “You shouldn’t be able to carry on a full conversation, but you should be able to say, ‘Hi, how are you?’” Instead of going hard in every workout, sub in walks or a yoga class for high-intensity interval training two to three times a week.

Whip up your own energy drink.

Most energy drinks are loaded with not only caffeine but also sugar—up to a whopping 35 grams per eight ounces. The result: A buzz and then a crash that may leave you even sleepier, a U.K. study found. Instead of coffee, make a hot cocoa your go-to afternoon pick-me-up. “It has less caffeine, so you won’t get as much of an energy crash, and it’s rich

in flavonoids, which help boost blood flow to the brain,” says Gavin Pritchard, R.D., a sports nutritionist and chef at Stamford Hospital in Connecticut. Try Pritchard’s low-cal supersip: Mix a cup of warm skim milk with two tablespoons of unsweetened cocoa powder, a tablespoon of brown sugar and a dash of sea salt to enhance flavor. The brown sugar sweetens the bitter cocoa, is less processed than white sugar and even contains small amounts of energy-boosting minerals like potassium, iron and magnesium.



Java Jolt

Step away from that second grande latte. You’ll get the biggest kick from caffeine if you use it sparingly. Aside from your morning cup of joe, save it for when you really can’t concentrate or have to be alert to, say, drive for hours, suggests Laura M. Juliano, Ph.D., an associate professor of psychology at American University in Washington, D.C. “Caffeine is a drug, and you can build up a tolerance to it,” Juliano explains. “Your body gets conditioned to expect caffeine at certain times, so if you miss your usual dose, you start feeling tired.” To wean yourself, cut your intake by about 25 percent a week. If you normally drink four cups of coffee a day, go down to three for a week and then to two the following week, Juliano says. Don’t forget to count—and be mindful of—the caffeine you may be getting from noncoffee sources such as soda, energy drinks, chocolate and over-the-counter pain relievers.

Burst your bubbles.

Chewing gum increases alertness and improves memory and concentration, according to a recent U.K. study. "We don't know why exactly, but we think it's because of increased blood flow to the brain following chewing, which leads to the delivery of more oxygen and glucose, as well as the energizing effects of gum's mint flavor," explains study author Andrew Johnson, Ph.D., a lecturer in psychology at Bournemouth University in England. Get smacking right before a big task: Students scored better on cognitive tests when they chewed gum for five minutes beforehand, a study from St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York, revealed.

Lend a helping hand.

Squeezing a charitable gig, like walking dogs for a local animal shelter, into your packed schedule seems as if it would only make you feel more crazed. But people who regularly volunteer report a lot more energy over a month than those who don't, according to a study by the UnitedHealth Group. "Acts of kindness create a physiological effect that lowers stress and anxiety and, at the same time, produces endorphins that put you in a relaxed but very alert state," explains Mark Moyad, M.D., a FITNESS advisory board member and the director of complementary and alternative medicine at the University of Michigan Medical Center. Another benefit: Volunteering provides social connections, which lead to the release of serotonin, the feel-good chemical that further buffers the energy-draining effect of stress on your body, Dr. Moyad adds. Match your passion to a charity near you at volunteermatch.org. Or simply do good whenever you work out by downloading the **Charity**



In cases of serious brain-drain: Chew a stick of minty gum.

Miles app (free, iTunes), which allows you to raise corporate dollars for your favorite cause whenever you run, walk or bike.

Pump up your potassium.

Magnesium, in foods like whole grains and leafy greens, often gets top billing as a magic energizing mineral, but potassium is the secret superstar. "Potassium reduces sodium intake and lowers blood pressure, which lessens stress and improves energy levels," Dr. Moyad explains. And most women fall far short of the RDA: Less than 1 percent get the 4,700-milligram allotment, he says. Multivitamins contain only up to 99 milligrams of the mineral, so be sure to include plenty of potassium-rich foods in your diet. Some of the best sources: a medium-size baked potato with the skin (926 mg), a cup of cooked

spinach (840 mg), a half cup of dried prunes (637 mg), a banana (422 mg) or a six-ounce cup of tomato juice (417 mg).

Strike a pose.

Nearly 85 percent of yogis report that doing downward dog boosts their energy, according to a University of Maryland study published last year. And British researchers found that people who did yoga just once a week for six weeks reported significantly more energy—as well as clear-mindedness, composure and confidence—than nonposers. One theory is that by decreasing levels of the stress hormone cortisol, yoga helps reduce fatigue and elevate mood, says Bruce Rabin, M.D., Ph.D., the director of the Healthy Lifestyle Program at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Do a few seated twists for a much-needed stretch and an energizing break whenever you're stuck at your desk all day, recommends Sarah Dillon, the spa director at Canyons Resort Spa in Park City, Utah. Sit deep in your chair with your feet parallel and knees lined up over your ankles. Lift your chest and roll your shoulders back. Turn your torso to the right, using your left hand to pull on the chair's right armrest and your right hand to push on the chair's backrest. Hold for 30 seconds. With each breath, sink further into the stretch. Repeat on your left side. ●