

Eating for Energy

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In today's fast-paced corporate world, many executives are operating at burnout pace and feeling the effects daily. Little do they know that many of the problems associated with low energy and fatigue may be largely due to diet and lifestyle choices. To avoid becoming a victim, you need to know where energy comes from, how we turn food sources into energy that the body can use and how your body actually uses it. Also, you need to be aware of elements that rob you of your energy and how to avoid them. Armed with this knowledge, you can take charge of your own health and determine what is best for you over the long term.

Where do we get our energy from?

Today, there are 50 known nutrients that the body requires to function efficiently. Because the body cannot make these nutrients you must obtain them from food sources. This is why they are called "essential nutrients". A prolonged deficiency in any one of these nutrients will lead to degenerative conditions in our health and lower energy levels.

Of these nutrients, there are only three that are deemed as "energy-yielding nutrients". These are carbohydrates, fats and proteins. The first step to obtaining abundant energy is to ensure that you get sufficient amounts of these energy-yielding nutrients. The recommended daily caloric intake is 50% from carbohydrates, 30% from fat and 20% from protein.

However, ALL 50 essential nutrients are required for optimum health. A deficiency in any one or more of these nutrients can have a significant effect on energy levels. For example, although iron is not an energy-yielding nutrient, a deficiency in iron can diminish the ability of blood to carry oxygen and nutrients to your cells, thus limiting the ability for your cells to produce energy.

All the required essential nutrients can be obtained from a balanced diet that includes five to nine servings of grains, vegetables, and fruits. However, busy executives running from one meeting to another rarely have the time to get adequate amounts of these nutritious foods. Instead, a plethora of fast and high sugar "junk" foods is the norm leading to poor health and energy levels.

If the diet does not include a regular supply of nutrient rich fruits and vegetables, then regular supplementation with multi-vitamins and multi-minerals is highly recommended. You should speak to a qualified nutritional consultant to get proper advice

on the right amount of supplementation suitable for your lifestyle.

Eating tips to maximise energy production

We need food to get energy but ironically, if you eat the wrong types of food, the process of digestion and elimination of toxins can take up to 60% of your energy from the food itself. If you have ever felt lethargic and sleepy after a heavy meal, you will understand what I mean. The point here is that you can minimise this outflow of energy by increasing the efficiency of the digestion process. Here are some suggestions:

- Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and sprouts. Apart from being rich sources of essential nutrients, they contain natural enzymes that can help our body digest them. This will reduce the demands on the body's own digestive enzymes. Cooking at high temperatures, however, will destroy these valuable enzymes so eat them raw.
- Fibre-rich foods like whole grains, fruits and vegetables assist the body in moving food through our digestive tract. This again will reduce the energy demands in the digestion process.
- Instead of three big meals a day, consider eating five smaller meals throughout the day. This will provide more constant sources of energy and reduce the energy required to break down large volumes of food at any one time.

How is energy produced in the body?

There are over 75 trillion cells in a healthy body. Within each cell are tiny power plants called "mitochondria" that produce all the energy in the body. Keeping your cells healthy is thus a critical component to having more energy.

Fats	Amino Acids	Minerals	Vitamins	Others
Linoleic Acid (omega 6)	Leucine	Calcium	A (retinol)	Carbohydrate
Linolenic Acid (omega 9)	Lysine	Magnesium	B1 (thiamine)	Fibre
	Isoleucine	Phosphorus	B2 (riboflavin)	Light
	Threonine	Potassium	B3 (niacin)	Oxygen
	Tryptophan	Sodium	B5 (pantothenic acid)	Water
	Methionine	Sulphur	B6 (pyridoxine)	
	Valine	Iron	B12 (cyanocobalamin)	
	Phenylalanine	Zinc	Folic Acid	
	Histidine	Copper	Biotin	
		Manganese	C	
		Chromium	D	
		Selenium	E	
		Cobalt	K	
		Fluorine		
		Silicon		
		Iodine		
		Molybdenum		
		Vanadium		
		Arsenic		
		Nickel		
		Tin		

The 50 essential nutrients

What do cells need to thrive? Apart from the 50 essential nutrients, cells require above all a continuous supply of oxygen to function efficiently. Studies show that even the slightest deprivation of oxygen can destroy and even mutate healthy cells. Deep breathing exercises and activities like chi-gong and yoga can greatly enhance the flow of oxygen to your cells and hence your energy levels.

Cells also require an abundant supply of pure water. In fact most of your cells consist of cytoplasm, which is mostly made up of water. All chemical and enzymatic activity in your body, including the production of energy, requires water as a medium. You should drink at least eight glasses of pure water per day to keep your cells working efficiently.

Stay away from "energy robbers"!

Below are three major energy-robbing elements you should avoid if you want to have abundant energy in your life.

1. Autointoxication

Anything that is not digested and assimilated by your body MUST be eliminated from the system or it will poison you from within. This is called autointoxication. It is understandable that busy executives today tend to just eat whatever is convenient. However, stay away from artificial or highly processed foods or it will rob you of energy and your health.

When you eat natural foods, most of them are digested and assimilated and very little remains to be eliminated. Highly processed and refined foods on the other hand offer very little in terms of nutritional content and leave a great deal of residue for the body to eliminate. This residue includes artificial flavouring, food preservatives, artificial colouring, hydrogenated fats, food conditioners, alcohol, caffeine and other non-nutrients.

The avenues for your body to evacuate these elements include your skin, lungs, bowel and urinary system. The process of elimination draws on your energy stores and excessive amount of these toxins can lead to oily skin, acne or foul breath among other symptoms. The fewer non-nutrients you ingest, the higher your daily energy levels will be.

2. Stress and stimulants

Don't drink coffee if you want more energy! Yes, you heard right! The next time you reach for that coffee in the morning when you arrive at the office, consider this - stress and stimulants like caffeine, sugar and nicotine are cousins because they rob you of energy in very similar ways. Stressful situations and stimulants act in the short term to give you a boost of energy by stimulating your adrenal glands to secrete hormones such as norepinephrine, epinephrine (adrenalin) and cortisol.

This inbuilt response is designed to help you escape physical danger as these hormones signal your heart to pound faster, release your stores of glucose into

the blood stream, tense your muscles, dilate the eyes and even thicken the blood. In a rush, your stores of energy are sent surging through your body and are depleted.

The cost of this momentary stimulation is a long and slow "down" time for your body to rebuild its stores. The subsequent fatigue is always greater than the momentary rush of energy that the stimulants provide. Prolonged stress and abuse of stimulants are leading causes in many degenerative conditions and one of the most common energy robbers today.

3. Improper food combination

Apart from what you eat, how you eat your food can make a major difference to your energy levels. Do not combine large amounts of proteins and carbohydrates in your meals as they are digested very differently. Protein digestion can interfere with carbohydrate digestion and mixing these food groups together will require the body to work harder to digest the same amount of food than if eaten separately.

Whilst pure water is extremely important to your health, do not drink during meals. The best time to drink fluids is 30 minutes before and after eating. Drinking during meals will dilute the enzymes necessary to digest foods.

Do not eat fruit after meals. The best way to eat fruits is to have them in the morning and on its own. Fruit is a very simple food consisting mostly of sugar, fibre, water and enzymes which the body can digest very quickly. Fruit travels through the body quicker than most other types of food. Eating fruit after meals will create a "traffic jam" for these fast moving foods and it will ferment in your system before it is fully digested. The by-products of the fermentation process will steal energy from your body.

Remember that your health is governed by natural laws - violate them and your body will become a living prison; embrace them and your body will become a wonderful vessel for your soul. □

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