

IN CELEBRATION OF THE THINKING WOMAN

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# SLUMPS

Do you find your energy levels dropping at certain times of the day? Using these simple techniques, you can start to boost your energy and use it to your advantage.

## Slump: Early morning

Do you find it hard to jump out of bed with enthusiasm, let alone wake up with any energy at all?

It is natural to take a bit of time each morning to overcome the grogginess of sleep and for your brain to catch up with your body. 'Sleep inertia' as it is called, refers to the tendency of a person to want to return to sleep even after suitable rest has been achieved. Usually, sleep inertia lasts between 15 and 20 minutes, but for some people it can last up to two hours. Like a cold engine, your body and brain need a bit of time to 'warm up' before you start feeling more energetic.

### Action task: Breakfast boost

Breakfast is so important to help overcome this initial slump of waking. As you most likely had your last meal about 10-12 hours ago, your body is low on glucose, which it needs to function efficiently. Start your day with a healthy omelette and grainy toast. Starting the day with good quality protein and carbohydrates will perk up your energy and keep you satisfied until your midday snack. Not all people feel energetic on eggs, so try a bowl of porridge and skim milk with added fresh fruit, to perk you up and give you a good dose of glucose. Experiment to see what works best for you and your body, and that helps you function best in terms of your mind and body. Do not forget to have a glass of water on waking to kick start your system and re-hydrate your body as dehydration can cause headaches and brain fog.

For caffeine lovers, a cup of coffee or tea can help give you a boost as long as it is coupled with food to boost your blood sugar levels and not used just as a sole breakfast item!

## Slump: Lunchtime fogginess

Most people experience a brain drain or a slump after lunch. The culprit could actually be what you are eating. If you consume a high carbohydrate meal, your blood sugar levels will surge and you will end up crashing, which will affect your concentration and energy levels. The worst thing you can do is skip lunch or even your mid-morning snack as your blood sugar levels can drop too low and cause you to work ineffectively and contribute to a lack of energy and concentration.

### Action task: Energy boost

Aim to consume a lunch that mixes carbohydrates with protein and fibre. The fibre will help slow down your digestion and therefore the release of insulin. One suggestion is a whole-wheat sandwich or bun with lean meat, salad and a smear of good fat, such as avocado. Vary your lunch menu to see what foods work best for you to increase your overall energy and function.

## Slump: Mid afternoon drain

It is very common for people to feel an energy drop around the 2-3pm mark each day. We do not have the luxury of being able to take a daytime nap, so we have to power on through this slump and wait for bedtime to rest.

### Action task: Take an outside break

The best way to combat this afternoon slump is to head outdoors. Go for a short brisk walk if you can or just soak up the sunrays. By getting a boost of natural light and sunlight, you will perk up. If you have the chance during this period, work out! It is the best remedy for fatigue and it can boost your efficiency and function for the rest of the day.

## Slump: After work drain

It does not seem fair that if you have worked all day and now you are home and free, but too tired to do anything!

Whatever you do and no matter how tired you feel, do not be tempted to have a nap. This could set you up for a restless night's sleep. Also, avoid zoning out in front of the television as you will contribute to fatigue even more by being inactive and lying down to watch.

### Action task: Get active

If you did not get a chance to exercise during the day, now is the time. Lace up those sneakers and go for a brisk walk or get into your weights routine. Add upbeat music and you will literally transform your energy and mood, not to mention help your overall health and fitness!

## Wind down

As the day ends, you want to gear your body and mind for rest. Avoid watching TV in bed or right before bed, as it can be too stimulating.

If you do find yourself tired throughout the day on a regular basis, even after experimenting with the above tips, maybe you are not getting enough sleep. Play around with going to bed earlier and adjust how long you sleep. In time, you should notice an increase in your energy levels from wake up to wind down by using the benefits of food, exercise and routine.

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