

Aging in Place: Stay Energized!

By Tina Rowley

We all want to live at home as long as possible. It is part of the American dream, to age in place. There are strategies to help us stay energized and maintain health and strength affording even greater independence and well-being at home, at work, or at play!

As Mom always said, “**Eat a good breakfast**”. Starting the day with an empty stomach or eating the wrong breakfast can sabotage your stamina. Sweet cereals, doughnuts and other simple carbohydrates all offer a quick jolt of energy. Yet that fast high can lead to a sudden low as your blood sugar spikes and then plummets leaving you feeling tired and weak.

For a steady supply of energy, meals should be a mix of fiber-rich complex carbohydrates (whole grains, vegetables, fruit), protein (eggs, meat, low-fat dairy), and a little healthy fat (olive or nut oil). This type of food will slow the absorption of carbohydrates into your bloodstream and keep your energy on an even keel.

A good breakfast meal: wholegrain cereal with milk and fruit. More fiber may mean more energy, suggests a recent Welsh study. Subjects who ate a high-fiber cereal every morning felt less tired than those who ate a low-fiber cereal.

Eat more often. For all day vitality, eat smaller-portion meals or snacks about every four hours to keep your blood sugar (energy) on an even keel. To avoid overeating, limit snacks to about 200 calories.

Just as your car won't run with out gas, your body needs to **keep its tank full**. If you are low on water, you will likely feel fatigued. Dehydration can also cause dizziness and confusion. Six to ten cups of water per day is essential for energy, since water helps us digest and metabolize our food.

You don't have to drink plain water to stay hydrated. Foods that contain water, juicy foods such as watermelon, cucumber, celery, tomatoes and apples, will help meet your fluid quota. If your urine is the color of pale lemonade, you are getting enough fluid. Darker, apple-juice colored urine indicates you are dehydrated.

Get more of the vitality vitamin. About 30 percent of us have lower-than-optimal blood levels of vitamin C. One of the earliest signs of this shortfall is feeling tired or listless. Research by Carol Johnston, PhD, of Arizona State University, shows that upping intake of vitamin C improves the body's ability to oxidize fat. The reduced ability to oxidize fat creates fatigue according to Dr. Johnston. For extra energy, she recommends getting about 11 milligrams of vitamin C from food (1 cup of strawberries contains 85 mg; 1 cup of orange has 80 mg; 1 kiwi 70 mg; 1 mango 58 mg).

A German study shows people who have high blood levels of vitamin C don't show the expected mental and physical signs of stress when subjected to psychological challenges. At any age, the healthier we are, the better able we are to deal with the ups and downs that we experience in daily life.

Exercise for energy. When you are tired, the last thing you want to do is jog, walk, or go to the gym. But a workout can recharge your batteries by releasing feel-good brain chemicals and pumping energizing oxygen to your brain. A University of Georgia at Athens analysis of 70 studies found that sedentary people who start exercising regularly have about 20 percent more energy and feel less fatigue than couch potatoes.

Try a lunchtime workout. A British survey found that, regardless of the type, duration and intensity of the activity, people who worked out at lunchtime were less likely to experience an afternoon slump. Exercise helps the body metabolize carbohydrates at a rate that will sustain energy.

Lighten the overload and make time for yourself. Make sure to leave room in your schedule for R&R. A two hour block of time twice a week, doing something that revitalizes you will go a long way in reducing fatigue. The activity can be as simple as reading, gardening, exercising, or seeing friends. Many people also find relaxation with therapeutic massage and reflexology.

Life-balance something we all strive to achieve and maintain. As we plan for our future years, this balance becomes more important to our health and well being, especially for those wanting to remain at home for as long as possible. You may be a caregiver for a family member, spouse, or neighbor, however, self-care is the most important. By maintaining your health you will enable you to give the care that your loved one deserves and insure your ability to age in place successfully.

Excerpts taken from an article by Mary Elizabeth Terzella