

4 Reasons You're So Tired



Although you might wake up feeling charged up for the day, your battery seems to drain quickly. Maybe that puts you on the hamster wheel of caffeine and sugar consumption, just to score enough energy spikes to conquer your daily tasks. You seem to sleepwalk through routine tasks, and when it comes to working out? You'll start tomorrow.

If that description sounds familiar, you're not alone. The National Sleep Foundation's [research](#) shows people in the U.S. get 20% less sleep than they did a century ago. They also work more hours, which can increase stress, lower the amount of family time and make vacations a distant memory. Cue the hamster wheel. But if you are managing to get the recommended 7–9 hours of sleep and still feel tired, other factors might be at play:

1. YOU'RE NOT EXERCISING ENOUGH

Talk about a vicious cycle: When you feel exhausted, you tend to skip working out, or at least don't exercise at the intensity you could. That can make you feel, well, even more tired.

A [study](#) by the University of Georgia found regular, low-intensity exercise can help boost energy levels, even when people think it won't.

Lead researcher Tim Puetz says, "Too often we believe that a quick workout will leave us worn out, especially when we're already feeling fatigued. However, we have shown that regular exercise can actually go a long way in increasing feelings of energy, particularly in sedentary individuals."

2. YOU'RE EXERCISING TOO MUCH

If you exercise regularly, there may be a point of diminishing returns — simply exercising more and more doesn't mean you act like Red Bull is coursing through your veins. In fact, it actually *causes* fatigue.

"Certain styles of exercise take the participant to a state of physical exhaustion on a regular basis, which may do more harm than good," notes functional and integrative medicine practitioner Chris Kesser.

He adds that there's a fine line between training hard and overtraining, and when that line is crossed, it pushes the body's stress response too far. That can result in a number of biochemical responses as the body tries to protect itself. One of those is to slow down several processes — creating fatigue as a result.

One solution is to make sure you're building rest days into your mix, so that you can fully recover from your workouts, mentally and physically.

3. YOUR GUT HEALTH IS OUT OF WHACK

There's been a significant amount of research in the past few years about the role of your gastrointestinal system in regulating emotions, energy, immunity and even skin health and chronic disease. All that good and bad bacteria in your digestive tract is central to your health, according to Jo Ann Hattner, RD, and co-author of "Gut Insight: Probiotics and Prebiotics for Health and Well-Being."

When it's out of balance, it can lead to allergies, lowered immune response, poor sleep and other factors that might contribute to exhaustion. Hattner suggests stocking your plate with gut-happy choices like fermented foods and all types of vegetables — and dialing down the processed stuff, especially sugar and refined carbs.

4. YOU'RE NOT SLEEPING AS WELL AS YOU THINK

Although you might wake up refreshed, that doesn't mean you've gotten a solid night's sleep. Even a mild case of sleep apnea can keep you from getting the deep sleep necessary to maintain energy throughout the day, according to Abbas Mansour, MD, director of the Sleep Lab at Baptist Easley Hospital in South Carolina.

"If sleep is fragmented, what you'll see is daytime sleepiness and trouble maintaining your energy," he says. "That affects alertness and concentration. Sleep apnea is very common, and underdiagnosed, so it's worth talking to your doctor about it."

If you've tried other strategies to tackle your energy crisis, a sleep study may be helpful to see if that's an issue.

In general, feeling exhausted all the time isn't a normal part of aging or living in a go-go-go society. Addressing stress, getting the right amount of exercise, improving your nutrition and practicing good sleep habits can go a long way toward kicking that caffeine habit to the curb.

