

Put an End to Your Fatigue

By Dr. Kristen Plunkett

The first step to putting an End to Your Fatigue is to get a medical assessment to identify the most common causes of fatigue such as anemia, hypothyroidism, adrenal fatigue, or diabetes. Without identifying and treating the cause of your fatigue you will not have a lasting effect of anything you do.

DIET

Diet is the most important key to having an adequate amount of energy. By giving the body all the nutrients it needs to function properly you will feel so much better. Here are some important keys to a healthy diet.

- Avoid margarine (which contains trans fatty acids or hydrogenated oils), overcooked meats, heated oils, refined sugar, alcohol, carbonated beverages, caffeine, and minimize simple carbohydrates (white pastas, white breads, white rice)
- Eat quality proteins such as fish, organic eggs, nuts and seeds. Eat plenty of leafy and colorful vegetables, whole grains, and fresh fruit
- To balance your blood sugars eat protein with every meal, and eat light snacks of fruit or vegetables between meals.
- Eat a high fiber diet with lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and flax seeds.
- Weight management: obesity can lead to insulin resistance, which makes it harder for sugars to get from your bloodstream into your cells causing fatigue. Losing weight can increase the insulin sensitivity, allowing the energy to get into your cells where it is needed. Weight should be lost healthily by a healthy diet and exercise.
- Consider a detoxification program. Many toxins can overload the body leading to fatigue. Regular detoxification can help eliminate these toxins providing a healthier environment for your body. You can do a simple detoxification at home or a more intense one through your Naturopathic Physician. Please use caution when doing home detoxification. Detoxifying herbs and supplements may dump the toxins too quickly leading to headache, nausea, abdominal pain, and fatigue. Make sure that your bowels are eliminating properly.
- Consider an allergy elimination diet. Eating foods that your body reacts to will increase the inflammation in your body. Inflammation increases pain and fatigue. Avoid dairy, wheat, soy, and eggs for 2 weeks. Then add back one at a time and



record any symptoms that you may have including headache, pain, indigestion, gas/bloating, etc. Wait 2 days before you add the next food group back.

EXERCISE

Exercise is important; it increases your basal metabolic rate—the rate at which you burn calories. It increases the blood flow to your tissues, bringing in fresh nutrients and oxygen and carry away any waste products. Exercise also increases our elimination of toxins through our skin, and it releases “endorphins” a feel good chemical messenger.

- Find a form of exercise that you enjoy: team sports, Curves, join a gym, walking at a quick pace, jogging, swimming, aerobics. If you enjoy it you are more likely to continue doing it.
- You want to elevate your heart rate for the best outcomes. Use this equation:
 $(120 - \text{your age}) \times 0.6 + \text{resting heart rate} = \text{minimum exercising heart rate}$
 $(120 - \text{your age}) \times 0.75 + \text{resting heart rate} = \text{maximum exercising heart rate}$
If you are just starting an exercise program start at the minimum heart rate

STRETCHING

Stretching is important to do on a daily basis. It is best done after a hot shower and/or after exercising. Stretching helps break up any adhesions in your muscles. By breaking up any knots in your muscles you are increasing the blood flow to them, bringing in fresh nutrients and carrying away wastes.



SLEEP

Sleep is an important aspect of health; it is the time that your body spends on repair and regeneration. The cause of insomnia should be evaluated. Proper sleep etiquette includes:

- Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine, alcohol
- Avoid stimulating television before bed
- Avoid doing any other activities in bed such as reading or watching television
- Go to bed around 9pm.
- Practice relaxation techniques, or take a warm bath before bed (you can add relaxing essential oils such as lavender)
- Relaxing herbal tea after dinner can help. (see the botanical section below)

STRESS MANAGMENT

The Stress Response is an important skill to have, ie: if you see a lion charging you—RUN. But prolonged stress can be damaging to our health. It is important to be aware of our stress and practice stress management. Sometimes our lives get so hectic that we don't feel we have the time to do anything for ourselves. By taking the time to take care of ourselves, we will be more productive, and our health will benefit. It is important to believe that “You are worth it!” Some examples of stress management include:

- Deep Breathing: take 12 deep slow breaths into your abdomen. This is great to do at your desk during a stressful day.

- Visualizations: take a few minutes, close your eyes and picture yourself in a calming environment, be as detailed as possible. For example: “You are on a deserted beach, feel the warm sand on your fingertips. Notice how the sand feels as it falls from your hand. Hear the waves crashing into the beach. Feel the warm breeze caress your skin, invigorating you.” You can purchase audio tapes to lead you through visualizations.
- Yoga or Tai Chi

NUTRIENTS

It is best to identify and treat any underlying conditions leading to fatigue. The following supplements may help increase your energy, but the problem will not be solved unless you address the underlying cause.

- Eat foods high in iron and B12: meat, dairy, poultry, fish, potato with skins, tofu, nutritional yeast
- Iron should not be supplemented unless you have been diagnosed with low ferritin (iron stores) or microcytic anemia.
- B complex supplementation works wonders for fatigue. The absorption of B12 is decreased with the use of drugs decreasing your stomach acid such as protonix, nexium, or prilosec. B12 shots intramuscularly are available.
- Vitamin C with bioflavonoids help the immune system and help the thyroid and adrenals produce hormones that increase our energy
- CoQ10 is required to convert carbohydrates and fats into energy and is also an antioxidant. Vitamin B6 is required to produce CoQ10 in our bodies.
- Meyer’s cocktails are an intravenous therapy used to provide the body with vitamins and minerals and they are high in B vitamins. By providing the nutrients intravenously, you bypass absorption in the intestines and the high dose forces the nutrients into the cells.

BOTANICALS

There are many herbs that can help us handle stress, relax us and provide us with energy.



They can be used dried in a tea or capsule, or liquid in a tincture.

- Calming/relaxing herbs: chamomile, hops, kava, lavender, passionflower, valerian
- Adaptogens (to help us with stress): ashwagandha, devil’s club, ginseng, Siberian ginseng, licorice, avena (milky oat tops), gotu kola
- Stimulating herbs: licorice, ginseng, devil’s club, Siberian ginseng

DISCLAIMER: The information contained in these pages should not be used as a basis for treatment which can only be provided by a qualified medical practitioner. You should consult a medical provider or the appropriate health professional for specific personal advice if you have concerns about your health or general well-being.