



Know the Facts

Health



Always Tired?

TACKLING LIFE'S ENERGY ZAPPERS

Do you find it hard to get up in the morning? Perhaps it is just one more hour of sleep you need and then you'll wake up wide eyed and refreshed. Or is it in the afternoon when you seem to run out of steam, unable to concentrate and barely able to keep your head off the keyboard? Feeling tired once in a while is normal; feeling exhausted on the other hand for longer than a week requires further investigation. Some of the most common reasons young people feel tired are explained in detail below.

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Lack of Sleep

One of the most obvious reasons we feel tired can be attributed to lack of sleep. Most adults need between 7 and 8 hours of sleep each night. Missing even one night of sleep can throw your system off. Not getting enough sleep on a regular basis can increase the risk for heart disease and decrease your ability to fight off infections. There are many different reasons why people don't get enough sleep. It could be a medical problem, stress, even lifestyle. Often there is just too much happening in our lives and not enough time to fit in all in. Sleep however, must be made a priority if we want to fully enjoy all that life has to offer. Follow a routine before bedtime that helps you relax and leave the stress of the day behind you. Keep your bedroom cool and cut down on light from street lights and TV. If you can't fall asleep within 15-20 minutes, turn the light on and read a book or have a cup of chamomile tea or warm milk and try again when you have relaxed bit more.

Altered Sleep-Wake Cycle

Our bodies are programmed to sleep between midnight and 7 a.m. and then again during the afternoon between 1p.m. and 4p.m. This internal "biological clock", responds to light signals through our eyes to promote wakefulness. Shift workers or even those who have a steady schedule of night time work are awake at the times when our body's natural circadian rhythm tells us we should be asleep. It is only natural that we will feel drowsy at night. The problem continues however, when we are unable to get a deep, uninterrupted sleep during the day. This sets us up for chronic lack of sleep. Chronic lack of sleep translates into a number of problems such as difficulty paying attention, low performance at work and school, difficulty controlling emotions, slowed responses, even falling asleep while driving.



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Sleep Apnea

This is not just loud snoring, this is a condition where the muscles in the throat relax enough to actually close the air passage and prevent air from getting to the lungs. People with sleep apnea actually stop breathing for a period of 10 or more seconds followed by gasping for air. They may not wake up fully, but experience fragmented sleep leading to tiredness in the day. It may be the anatomical shape of the palate or jaw, obesity and often the ingestion of alcohol or sedatives that causes tissues to swell. If you or your partner experience loud snoring, periods of not breathing (apnea), awoken in the morning not feeling rested, feel tired, have headaches, memory loss, even high blood pressure, seek medical attention.

Depression

Feeling sad or down at one time or another for short periods is a natural part of life. Clinical depression on the other hand, is a disorder in which feelings of sadness, loss, or anger interfere with everyday life and last for extended periods of time. Symptoms include trouble sleeping or excessive sleeping, change in appetite, fatigue and loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness, agitation, withdrawal from usual activities, or reoccurring thoughts of suicide. Depression often runs in families, it may be due to chemical imbalance or even learned behavior. It is usually triggered by a stressful or unhappy event. If you feel depressed for two weeks or longer you should seek help. Meanwhile get enough sleep, eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, spend time with friends and consider prayer or meditation as a way to relax and draw on your inner strength.

Stress

It is rare to find someone who hasn't experienced stress. When stress begins to interfere with sleep or leads to unhealthy behaviors such as drinking or overeating it is time to reevaluate the situation and perhaps seek help. Often talking to a friend can help. Making a conscious effort to change the way you interpret negative interactions can alleviate stress; a proper diet, and exercise also help balance stress hormones. Make a point to deal with stress during the day, make lists, even schedule worrying time and problem solving time during the day so it doesn't haunt you at night.





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Diet

Start your day off with a good breakfast to give yourself the energy you need to meet the challenges both physical and mental that lie ahead. Choose fruits, vegetables, proteins and whole grains rather than sodas and sugary snacks. The energy burst from sugars lasts a short time and usually ends up lowering your blood sugar to the point where you feel tired. Too much caffeine and caffeine in the afternoon can make it difficult to sleep at night. Finally, alcohol may help you fall asleep but can lead to interrupted sleep during the night, leaving you tired in the morning.

Medical Conditions

A number of medical conditions may contribute to drowsiness during the day and even lead to fatigue. Anemia and Hypothyroidism are two very common disorders in young people. Medications such as antihistamines for allergies, tranquilizers and sleeping pills can also cause drowsiness during the day. Depression may also be indicated in people who feel tired all the time.

Anemia or "iron poor blood or tired blood" is a common condition affecting more than 3 million people in the US. It tends to affect women of childbearing age more than men. Anemia is a condition in which a person's blood either has a lower than normal number of red blood cells or the red blood cells don't have enough hemoglobin. The main role of red blood cells is to carry oxygen to the rest of the body and secondly to remove carbon dioxide from cells and carry it to the lungs to be exhaled. People with anemia may feel tired, dizzy, have chest pain, have cold hands and feet and look pale due to the fact that not enough oxygen is reaching body tissues and organs.

Certain types of anemia are caused by low levels of vitamins or iron in the body. Vitamin supplements commonly taken are B12, folate and Vitamin C to assist in the absorption of iron. A diet high in iron may be all that is needed. The body can absorb iron from red meats such as beef and liver more easily than it can from plant sources. Other foods high in iron are: spinach and other dark green vegetables, peanuts, eggs, lentils and dried fruits such as raisins, apricots and prunes. Other types of anemia may be due to blood loss from gastrointestinal ulcers, even cancer while other anemias may be inherited and treated with medications. If you have the above symptoms or a family history of sickle cell anemia or thalassemia, seek help from a physician.

An **under active thyroid** (hypothyroidism) is another very common condition in which the thyroid gland fails to produce enough thyroid hormone to regulate metabolism. This may affect all body functions. In general the body's normal rate of functioning slows causing mental and physical sluggishness. Early symptoms include weakness, fatigue, cold intolerance, unintentional weight gain, depression, and thin brittle hair and nails. With treatment which usually includes replacement of the deficient thyroid hormone the person returns to normal functioning.

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Sources: www.nhlbi.nih.gov, www.nlm.nih.gov, www.freepik.com.