

FEELING TIRED AND FATIGUED?

You are not alone ...



Fatigue is a common condition, often misunderstood or even dismissed by conventional medical practitioners. Jason Mallia shares some ways to boost energy levels and put the spring back into your step.



Does getting out of bed seem to be getting harder and harder, and is bouncing up in the morning feeling excited and energised a thing of the past? Do you crave longer sleep-ins, and often feel a lack of motivation? A good question to ask yourself is when this change happened, and what could have caused it. Was there an event or

an alteration in your life conditions that could have triggered your fatigue?

For many of us low energy states develop over a long period of time. You don't notice the change on a day-to-day basis. The scary thing is that we actually lose the ability to distinguish between what is normal and not normal.



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A good barometer for establishing whether you are lacking in energy is to look at various aspects of your life, such as sleep habits (are you sleeping more or less?), productive hours in your day (are you getting as much done as you used to?), how much exercise you are able to do, and what you do in your spare time (are you active or resting?).

CAUSES OF FATIGUE

Fatigue is a very common condition and is often misunderstood, undiagnosed or even dismissed. Many patients visit their doctor, undergo standard diagnostic procedures such as blood tests, and are told that there is no apparent cause for their lack of energy. However, that doesn't necessarily mean there is nothing wrong – after all, you know how you feel! And everyone wants to feel as well as possible.

The causes of fatigue are in fact often sub-clinical, meaning that there is a dysfunction in the person's health but no condition that can be identified using the diagnostic criteria of mainstream medicine. The next point of call is often the integrative medicine or naturopathic practitioner, who is able to look at the person's functional state to ascertain the nature of the fatigue.

These are some of the areas that may be investigated:

- Haematological studies, to see if your blood is deficient in iron
- Nutritional deficiencies, caused by poor food choices
- Past exposure to glandular fever, or other viruses such as HIV that may contribute to an immune deficiency
- Adrenal and cortisol levels, to check if there is adrenal fatigue (a very common state)
- Oxidative stress markers, to check the state of the body's cells and identify cells prematurely broken down by toxins or stress
- The level of oxygen in the body – oxygen is necessary for energy production
- The amount of adenosine triphosphate in the body, via detection of sodium/potassium pump activity
- Thyroid studies, to check for sub-clinical hypothyroidism (very common)
- Past traumatic incidents that may be unresolved
- Many other areas may be looked at, depending on the individual.

ARE YOUR MITOCHONDRIA FIRING?

Mitochondria are tiny structures that occupy our cells. They are like miniscule batteries, providing energy for the entire body. In order for the mitochondria to fire, specific nutrients are required to produce energy at a sufficient rate.

When our bodies become deficient in these nutrients, or any of them are not available, our energy store runs out, leaving us feeling tired or, over a longer period, fatigued. In order to keep the mitochondria firing we need to feed them with the right stuff!

Another way to boost energy is to build lean muscle mass. By increasing muscle mass we directly increase the levels of mitochondria in our bodies. Not only does the increased muscle help us to burn energy, it also helps to convert unwanted fat stores to energy, leading to weight loss.

What can you do to boost your energy levels and maximise your mitochondrial function? It is essential to get back to basics and eat a well-balanced diet, including fresh fruit and veggies and lean meat. Eating for your blood type is optimal; this will ensure that your food is well assimilated, giving your mitochondria the best possible opportunity to receive the nutrients you consume.

For some people, just making these changes is enough to put the bounce back into their step. Most, however, need more intensive support. If you feel the above is not enough, your fatigue should be properly investigated. Your naturopathic medicine practitioner will guide you to a better understanding of the root causes.

- The following are further fundamentals:
- Ensure that you get enough sleep every night.
 - Ensure that you get plenty of fresh air every day.
 - Drink plenty of clean, filtered water throughout the day.
 - Exercise every day, even if it is for a short period of time.
 - Manage your stress and learn effective ways to relax after a good day's work.
 - Avoid too many stimulants such as caffeine, foods high in sugar, and alcohol.



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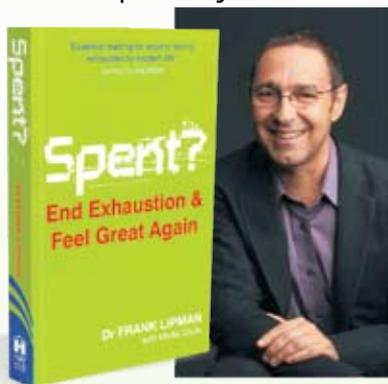
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IMPROVING HEALTH

SUPPLEMENTS FOR ENERGY OPTIMISATION

Most of us know that our bodies use the fats and carbohydrates we consume to produce energy. To a lesser extent, we also use protein for energy production. But how does this actually happen?

Fats and carbohydrates cannot get into the mitochondria to be used as energy by themselves. They need the assistance of other nutrients, to open the gates for them and facilitate their entry into the mitochondria.

Two of the key nutrients that enable this process to take place are N-acetyl carnitine and lipoic acid.

- N-acetyl carnitine is your body's fat transporter, and helps fat cross the cell into the mitochondria.
- Lipoic acid acts like a gatekeeper, opening the gates for carbohydrates to enter the cell to be used as energy.
- As well as improving your energy, lipoic acid is also useful for balancing blood sugar, and can be helpful in reducing cravings for sugary foods and potentially also assisting weight loss.
- Co-enzyme Q10 is also vital for healthy energy production in our cells. It is an antioxidant and protects the mitochondria from day-to-day damage and loss.
- Omega-3 fatty acids or fish oils are vital for keeping the outer membranes of the mitochondria stable and healthy. If our omega-3 levels are too low, the mitochondria can become damaged. Over time this damage accumulates and gradually we produce less and less energy, making us feel increasingly tired.

If you are unsure what it best for you, please contact your health care professional. ●