

*LiveHealthy*

# How to fake awake

Perform at your peak—even when you're running on empty—with these power-up tips.

By Barbara Brody

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Photograph by Joseph Montezinos/Contour Style for Getty Images

# Live Healthy {Every Day}

Chances are, you have plenty of experience operating on something less than 40 winks. After all, a National Sleep Foundation survey found that a full 72 percent of women wake up feeling unrefreshed at least a few times a month, a habit that can impact everything from your waistline to your job performance. But your go-to fatigue fix may be doing more harm than good: Almost half of those polled said they rely on sugary or carb-heavy foods for a quick jolt after a restless evening, and 21 percent smoke cigarettes (yikes!) to help shake off persistent brain fog. Next time a work project, a sick kid, or late-night TV cuts your snooze time short, try these healthier, expert-approved energizers.

## Eat a protein-filled breakfast

Step away from the blueberry muffin. All that sugar may give you a rush, but the boost it provides is only temporary. “Danish, doughnuts, and even natural fruit juice will send your blood glucose sky-high, followed by a crash soon after,” says Joy Bauer, R.D., the nutrition and health expert on the *Today* show. Instead, reach for lean protein and quality carbs, a combination that will offer slow-burning, lasting fuel. The leftover chicken and veggie stir-fry from last night’s dinner will work just fine, says Bauer, as will an egg-white omelet, Greek yogurt, a protein smoothie, or lowfat cottage cheese with a piece of fruit or a slice of whole-grain toast. To keep energy levels balanced until bedtime, make sure every

snack and meal you eat during the day incorporates the same nutritious mix.

## Down a mini jolt of java

Coffee (or any caffeine-packed beverage) is your best friend on drowsy days, but skip the large latte if you’re not already used to a jumbo-size mug; otherwise, it could leave you feeling jittery and anxious, explains Joseph Ojile, M.D., director of the Clayton Sleep Institute in St. Louis. You’re better off drinking about 8 ounces (a size small at most places) first thing in the morning, then refilling your cup around noon. Just remember that it takes 30 to 60 minutes for caffeine to kick in, so allow some time between your first sip and your drive into work or your early a.m. meeting. That said, if you’re super

fatigued, no amount of coffee will make it safe to get behind the wheel. “After being awake for 18 to 24 hours, most people are functioning at the level of someone who is legally impaired from alcohol,” warns Ojile. Play it safe and hitch a ride with a coworker or catch the bus instead.

## Boost your “B” levels

Many vitamins and supplements take a while to provide any noticeable impact, but there are a few that yield a same-day benefit, says Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., an internist and chronic fatigue specialist based in Kona, HI, and the author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic!* To increase your pep, he recommends popping a B-50 complex pill that contains at least 50 micrograms of



### SMOOTH MOVE

A handful of spinach adds more energizing iron to your protein-fruit smoothie.

biotin, 500mcg of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, and 400mcg of folic acid, along with 200 milligrams of magnesium. This safe megadose of B vitamins will aid in the body’s conversion of food to fuel, and the extra magnesium—which amounts to a little less than a third of the recommended daily value—helps you use oxygen more efficiently, making you feel rejuvenated.

## Chew mint-flavored gum

Freshen your breath and give your body a much-needed kick at the same time? Yes, please! People who chewed mint gum while sitting in a darkened room (meant to make them drowsy) showed fewer signs of fatigue than those who didn’t, according to a report from England’s Coventry

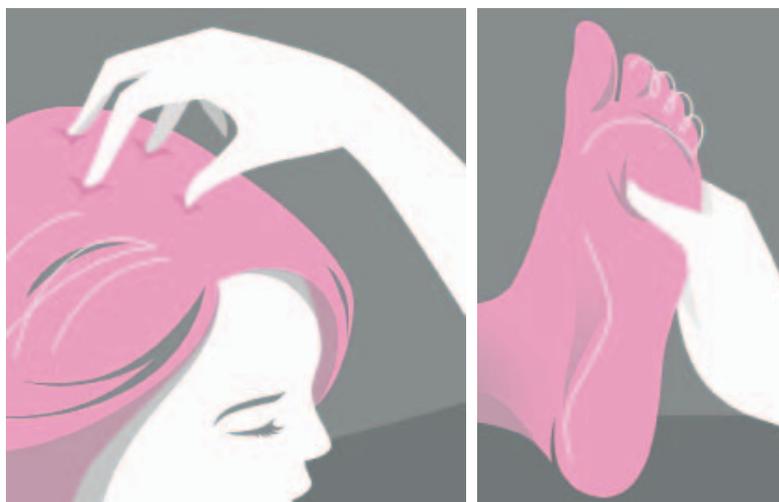
Photograph by Claire Benoit; styling by Wendy Scheldt for Halley Resources Inc.

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University. Other research shows that the habit seems to increase electrical activity in the brain, which makes you more alert, explains Andy Smith, Ph.D., director of the Center for Occupational and Health Psychology at Cardiff University in the U.K. “The effect is most pronounced 15 minutes after chewing,” he adds. “If you keep popping a new piece, the benefits can last for over an hour.”

## Try a DIY massage

Concentrating on anything is difficult when you're struggling to keep your eyes open. But acupressure can help, report investigators from the University of Michigan. Two proven moves: First, tap the top of your skull with your fingertips for one minute. “That will clear your mind by stimulating a set of four points called Si Shen Cong,” explains Aimee Raupp, a neurobiology research scientist and Eastern medicine expert based in Nyack, NY. Next, use your thumb or a golf or tennis ball



**UNDER PRESSURE** Massaging these stimulating points on your feet and head is thought to release blocked energy and lift brain fog.

to massage the Kidney 1 point—which is on the center of the ball of your foot (directly below the middle toe) and is thought to encourage focus—for one minute on each side.

If you need a subtler shot in the arm (during an endless meeting, for example), grab a pen and paper and start scribbling. “Doodling is a small diversion that seems to prevent the larger distraction of daydreaming,” says Jackie Andrade, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at the University of Plymouth in the U.K. She found that people who shaded in printed shapes

while on a faux phone call recalled 29 percent more information later than those who didn't.

## Take a breath (or three)

“Oxygen equals energy,” says high-spirited fitness guru Denise Austin, author of 12 books, including *Get Energy!* To take full advantage of this life-sustaining gas, remember to stand up, stretch your arms overhead, and look toward the ceiling every few hours. “Sitting disrupts blood flow, as does slouching, which you're more prone to do when you're already struggling to keep your eyes open,” she says. “The more you slump, the lower your oxygen intake, because your rib cage is closing in on your diaphragm.” Before you sit down again, take three very deep breaths: “Inhale through your nose, release the air

through your mouth, and make a ‘ha’ sound at the end of your exhale,” suggests Austin. She says this technique is the most efficient way to release carbon dioxide-rich stale air, which makes you feel fatigued, and reoxygenate the blood.

## Sing out loud

Simply cranking up your go-to playlist might not cut it on a super-sleepy day. A better bet: singing along, say researchers in the *Journal of Music Therapy*. While listening to music is passive, belting out the same tunes engages your mind, invigorating you, explains study author Hayoung Lim, Ph.D., a neurologic music therapy fellow at Oral Roberts University. Can't take a karaoke break? She suggests tapping along to a beat on your knees, a table, or a steering wheel instead.

## Exercise your upper body

A little movement can help keep you from fading, but even the most devoted gym-goer will have a hard time lacing up her sneakers when she's fighting to keep her eyes open. So if you're skipping your workout, try to fit in one-minute bursts of upper-body strengtheners, like push-ups, whenever you can, suggests Austin, whose new DVD, *Denise Austin Total Body Toning*, includes a 10-minute upper-body workout. “Anytime you involve your arms, you'll work the muscles that are closest to the heart and promote stimulating blood flow.”

## Snack on chocolate

Lack of sleep makes you more apt to reach for junk food the next day, say researchers from UC Berkeley, so don't be surprised if your sweet tooth starts aching. A little indulgence can actually assist you in shaking off lethargy—as long as you bypass vending machine fare in favor of a few squares of high-quality dark chocolate (60 percent cocoa or higher). “Cocoa contains theobromine, a gentle natural stimulant,” explains Teitelbaum. That means it gives you energy without making you jittery—or interfering with bedtime tonight.

**Cocoa contains a gentle natural stimulant that energizes without making you jittery.**