

Foods and Fatigue

Your body runs off what you feed it. The best way to get the most energy from your food is to make sure you're giving yourself the best food possible. Try these tips for boosting brain power and increasing your energy!

- 1. Avoid processed foods.** Processed foods, such as some packaged or canned foods, candy, boxed meals, and precooked meats are typically full of preservatives, additives, sodium, trans fat, and artificial ingredients that may slow you down.
- 2. Opt for fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables.** The fresher your food, the more nutrients it will contain. Unlike processed foods that may be stripped of nutrients for a longer shelf life, fresh foods typically contain higher nutrients. Eating in-season fruits and vegetables means they ripened naturally. Consuming a variety of fruits and veggies will also provide your body with different vitamins and minerals that work towards making energy.
- 3. Limit caffeine.** Caffeine is acceptable in moderation, and it has been shown to have some health benefits. However, although it provides a short-term boost, it doesn't actually provide the body with energy. The first sips may give you a jolt, but if you're not providing your body with good nutrition and balanced meals and snacks, you'll eventually feel run down. If you need your caffeine fix, opt for black coffee or unsweetened tea. Sodas and energy drinks can be full of refined sugar and artificial ingredients that can cause you to crash, and lead to other health issues if overconsuming.
- 4. Trade red meat for lean proteins.** Consuming red meats marbled in fat adds saturated fat to your diet. Leaner meats, like chicken, turkey, and fish, still provide quality protein but contain less saturated fat. Fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, like salmon and tuna, can add beneficial, heart healthy fats. According to University of Maryland Medical Center, consuming too few omega-3's can lead to fatigue, mood swings, and depression.
- 5. Choose complex carbs.** Just like processed foods, refined carbohydrates like sugars and white flour add little nutrition. Choosing whole grains and complex carbohydrates ensures your body gets the full benefits of the hull of the grain that adds fiber to your diet. Complex carbohydrates provide a more lasting source of energy than simple carbohydrates because they take longer to digest.
- 6. Snack on nuts and seeds.** Nuts and seeds are a great choice to beat fatigue and fight hunger. Getting a variety of nuts and seeds in your diet can provide healthy nutrients and energy. Try almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, pecans, walnuts, sunflower seeds, and pumpkin seeds. Eating raw, unsalted versions is recommended.



7. **Stay hydrated.** Drinking water is essential for optimal functioning of the body. Although water doesn't provide energy in the form of calories, it helps facilitate the energetic processes in the body, which is an energy boost in itself. Sip on water throughout the day, and try to swap out sodas, coffee, and other drinks for a glass of water. This simple change can make a big difference, and you'll feel better before you know it.
8. **Consider vitamins and minerals.** If you're not getting everything you need from your food, you may want to consider taking a daily vitamin. Consulting with a nutritionist/registered dietitian is recommended for help with specific vitamins. Make sure to talk to your healthcare provider about any and all nutritional vitamins/supplements before starting them.
9. **Grab a banana.** A recent study compared bananas to carbohydrate sports drinks in cyclists who needed sustained energy for their long rides. Researchers found the banana offered just as much fuel to the riders as the drink. Bananas are packed with potassium, fiber, vitamins, and the perfect amount of carbohydrates that provide you with a big boost of natural energy. Plus, bananas are often less than a dollar per fruit, and that's a price you can't beat for so much extra energy.
10. **Incorporate oats.** A big bowl of oats packs a punch of filling fiber and even a little protein. Plus, it's good for people who experience blood sugar spikes and drops with other processed breakfast cereals. Choosing the plain versions of instant packets of oatmeal, steel-cut oats, or old-fashioned oats is best as they aren't filled with extra sugar. You can then have control of what you put in it, such as milk, a little honey and some mixed berries, for an extra boost of energy.
11. **Sprinkle in some chia.** Chia seeds may be an excellent source of prolonged energy thanks to carb content, healthy fats, and filling fiber. Two tablespoons of chia provide about 24 grams of carbs and a whopping 4.8 grams of omega-3s, which are heart healthy and anti-inflammatory. Try sprinkling in a few tablespoons of chia seeds with your morning smoothie or adding a scoop to your afternoon yogurt to help keep fatigue at bay.

To learn more about how diet and nutrition may affect your brain power and energy levels, contact Caterpillar Registered Dietitian **Rhonda Haller** at [Haller Rhonda M@cat.com](mailto:Haller_Rhonda_M@cat.com)!

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