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HEALTH
WATCH

YOUR ALL-DAY ENERGY PLAN!

Up for anything: a few simple strategies will put you at the top of your game



Brush your teeth in the dark, eat breakfast by a window and turn your alarm clock to the wall... The surprising tricks that will boost your energy

Early morning: kick start your day

HARNESS YOUR INNER ALARM CLOCK

Waking up at the wrong time can leave you feeling groggy and exhausted, says Sammy Margo, author of *The Good Sleep Guide*. 'To establish your ideal wake-up time, wait for a weekend, go to bed at 11pm, and allow yourself to wake up naturally. My body always wakes me up at 6.47 exactly,' says Sammy. Then make sure you go to sleep and wake up at those times every day, including holidays and weekends.

DON'T FORGET TO DRINK

'As soon as you wake up, have a drink of water or herbal tea – even if you can't face

breakfast yet,' says dietician Sian Porter. 'Dehydration can make you feel tired and irritable,' she explains.

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

It may not sound tempting but, for an instant energy hit, take a cold shower, says the author of *Energise You*, Oliver Gray. 'Start warm and gradually

turn the temperature down. It's great for boosting circulation and giving you a kick.'

BACK-UP BREAKFASTS

'Whatever happens, don't skip breakfast,' says Sian Porter. Prepare for busy mornings by keeping quick and easy options to hand, such as porridge sachets, dried fruit and nuts.

LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE

To banish lethargic mornings, expose yourself to as much bright light as possible as soon as you wake up. 'Try having breakfast outside or, if that's not practical, move your breakfast table closer to the window,' says Professor Russell Foster, a neuroscientist who studies the effects of light on our sleep and body clock. 'This increases your alertness for the day and tells your body to go into sleep mode about 16 hours later.'

81%
of women suffer
from energy
slumps

SMELL THE COFFEE, AND WAKE UP

Coffee in the morning can make you feel bright and energetic – but caffeine can also interfere with sleep. Sammy Margo says: 'Use coffee strategically. My caffeine cut-off time is 11am because it affects my sleep, but most people need to stop drinking it at lunchtime. If you're still buzzing at bedtime, stop an hour earlier and see how you feel.'

Maintain motivation and beat those energy lows

BUST THE MULTI-TASKING MYTH

When we arrive at the office, most of us start checking our emails, chatting to colleagues and making calls simultaneously. Jean Gomes of The Energy Project teaches people how to be more efficient at work. He explains why doing one thing at a time makes the most of your energy resources: 'Researchers at NASA invented something called interruption science, to investigate how much people can multitask. They proved that you're actually switching your focus from one thing to another very quickly, and that makes each task last 25% longer. Even more shocking: your IQ drops by 10 to 15 points, more than if you were smoking marijuana!'

LUNCH – THE GREAT LEVELLER

To avoid energy spikes and falls, choose foods with a low glycemic load, such as a quinoa salad or a root vegetable soup, suggests Dr Gill Hart, a clinical biochemist for YorkTest food and allergy testing company. These foods release energy slowly and keep levels steady throughout the day, so you should be able to cut out sweet snacks and avoid post-lunch fatigue.

SIT STRAIGHT, LOOK SHARP

'Set an alarm on your computer so that every 20 minutes you stand up and get out of the C-shaped sitting posture,' says Sammy Margo. 'And remember BBC: Buttocks into the Back of the Chair. Sit tall and feel how a better posture makes you feel more energised.' There's a reason it's called an energy slump!

NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT...

We have a natural energy curve that peaks at 11am, flattens out, and dips at 3pm. To counteract this mid-afternoon slump, Jean Gomes suggests taking a few minutes to do something completely different – if you've been sitting at your computer, go for a break outside. If you've been standing up doing a presentation, find a quiet space for yourself, close your eyes and breathe deeply for a few minutes.

WALK AND TALK

'Rather than sitting down with your colleague, go for a walk,' says Jean Gomes. 'Everything changes when you stand up – you feel more confident, energised, and have new ideas. And less pressure to make eye contact means your mind is free to find a creative solution.'

Evening wind-down: relax and restore, ready for tomorrow

NO MORE TOP-UPS

Evenings are all about building your reserves for the next day, so if a glass of wine with dinner helps you to relax, make sure it's no more than a glass – any more will prevent you from reaching the deeper phases of sleep and leave you feeling groggy in the morning, says Sammy Margo. Try to include turkey, almonds, potatoes, lettuce, chamomile, Marmite or honey in your dinner, as these foods include tryptophan, an amino acid that aids the release of the sleep hormone melatonin.

BRUSH YOUR TEETH IN THE DARK

About an hour before you go to bed, start reducing your exposure to light, says neuroscientist Russell Foster. **'Most people brush their teeth in a bathroom flooded with bright light, but that just increases your alertness and decreases your tendency to sleep. So, if you can, brush your teeth in the dark – or at least in dim light.'**

DREAM SANCTUARY

'Your bedroom should be a temple to sleep,' says Russell Foster. It needs to be dark, so make sure your curtains and blinds have blackout linings. Banish any technology, including computers, smart phones and televisions – the blue light they emit interferes with sleep. And it needs to be cool – if you feel too cold when you go to bed, try wearing bed socks and mittens, as this will

EMBRACE YOUR INNER DIMMER

'Your body has a dimmer switch, not an on-off switch,' says Sammy Margo. 'A bedtime routine helps you glide into sleep, as well as making that sleep more restorative so you feel rested the next day. An hour before you get into bed, start winding down. Try a warm bath with lavender, reading, or eating a banana – it may sound counter-intuitive but, with all its potassium, magnesium and serotonin, it has all the right ingredients to help you relax.'

keep you warm but allow your core body temperature to drop by about one degree, which is part of the process of falling asleep.'

LOSE YOUR SENSE OF TIME

If you have to have an alarm clock by your bed, turn it to face the wall as soon as you've set it, because clock watching can really disturb your sleep, says Dr Ian Smith, Director of the Sleep Centre at Papworth Hospital. □