

# MORE PEP IN YOUR STEP

Expert advice on how to beat fatigue and boost your energy levels.

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 Dragging your feet to bed every night? If this is you then you are not alone. A recent survey conducted by Symbio found that 59 per cent of all New Zealand women feel tired, and less than a quarter (24 per cent) are satisfied with their energy levels.

We talked to a top nutritionist and trainer to get their tips for solving that energy crisis in your life.

**MONIQUE RANA**  
**MODEL AND CO-FOUNDER OF**  
**BODYTECH GYM**

**Everyone knows we need regular exercise, but many people believe it makes you tired, not energised. What do you think?**

I don't think many of us believe a lifestyle of regular exercise won't enhance our energy levels. If you're deconditioned and absent from regular exercise, then the very thought of it may cause you anxiety. However, that's not necessarily a bad thing if it gets you out of the easy chair and into your trainers. In the short term, if exercise is to be of any value, it should tax you, but not be so taxing that you cannot fully function for the rest of the day. In the long run, exercise will certainly soothe feelings of anxiety and make you more resilient to fatigue. Exercise is a great natural antidepressant for a lot of people. It boosts your serotonin levels (feel-good chemicals), increases your libido, and makes you feel better. But balance is key. Too much exercise will lead to overtraining and depletion of energy.

## MONIQUE'S TOP TIPS FOR STAYING ALERT

In three words - Eat, Move, Sleep. Choices count. You can make decisions today that will give you more energy tomorrow. No matter how fit you are presently, you can take specific measures to have more energy. You can 'fuel your fire' and create patterns of constant energy renewal by increasing the amount of movement in your day (over and above exercising); eating quality calories; and by making a habit of getting a good night's sleep.

**1 EATING** What I have personally learned from BodyTech's research of the scientific literature, and which has ultimately influenced my daily decisions, is that every bite of food either increases or decreases how well I sustain my energy throughout the day. Also, make water your best friend and sip at least two litres during the day.

**2 EXERCISE** A half-hour of vigorous exercise three times per week helps fight off fatigue throughout the working week. On the other days I love to exercise my dog outdoors in nature, as this is great for my body, mind and soul.

**3 SLEEP** A good night's sleep allows me more energy to confront the next day and have better interactions. Don't eat cooked food late at night - this means your body will be trying to digest it when it should be resting.

## Are there any forms of exercise that are better for keeping you alert?

There's no evidence that pits one form of exercise against another for better alertness. Simply being in shape promotes this. There's good science that suggests creating more opportunities to move in your workday stimulates alertness and concentration levels. At BodyTech, we recommend moving every 30 minutes whenever practical. For example, instead of sending a workmate an email, deliver the message in person. Or get up and refill your water bottle before sitting back at your desk.

## Is there a quick exercise women can do in the afternoon when they're feeling a bit lacklustre?

Move more frequently throughout the day. If you're a stay-at-home mum, turn on some music and dance to it with your kids. Have some fun with movement. When at work, get up frequently; instead of having seated work meetings, have walk meetings.

Also, one of the things I personally like doing in addition to moving is deep diaphragmatic breathing. It's something we should be mindful of and do with increased frequency, especially when sitting for a long time. Shallow breathing leads to increased stress/tension in the body and may contribute to feelings of tiredness. If you can't take a break away from your desk, do five deep diaphragmatic breaths that take about 10 or more seconds to complete. Eventually work up to 10 deep diaphragmatic breaths.

Laugh a lot and often... it's a great way to pick yourself up. ▶