

10 Keys to High Energy Living

by Dr. Deidre Macdonald

We all want abundant energy. Without it, we can't enjoy all life has to offer. Lack of energy is the number one complaint I hear from my patients. Here are the top 10 strategies I use to help my patients reach their potential for energy and vitality.

1) Rule out physical causes of fatigue:

While fatigue is an extremely common complaint, it can be the first symptom of disease. Cardiovascular disease and cancer are two conditions in which fatigue is often overlooked as an early warning sign. It is important to pay attention to drops in your energy and to consult your naturopathic or conventional doctor for a complete physical and thorough blood work to see if other signs and symptoms of disease are present.

2) Optimize digestion:

In my practice, I have treated literally thousands of people whose energy increased upon improving their digestion. I have observed that when digestive problems are left untreated, (or are simply treated with drugs that temporarily suppress symptoms) people are robbed of their vitality. For instance, chronic indigestion, acid reflux and Irritable Bowel Syndrome can often be eliminated without the use of drugs through diet changes and natural medicine. Improved digestion means the body can absorb more nutrients and eliminate more waste. This naturally results in more energy and improved functioning of many systems in the body.

3) Eat the right diet for you:

There are so many different diet plans out there these days. High carb - low fat, low carb - high fat, how are you to know which plan is best for you? In coaching my patients, my first priority is to encourage them to eat nutritious foods and to avoid processed and addictive foods like sugar, flour products, caffeine and alcohol. My next priority is to assess their individual food sensitivities. A high proportion of my patients who come in complaining of low energy are then able to identify key foods that trigger their fatigue and cause other symptoms. Knowing which foods to avoid enables them to unleash their full energy. What a gift! If blood sugar imbalances are occurring, patients often report feeling "wired but tired". Low blood sugar causes an energy crash but also an adrenaline rush that can add to a feeling of stress and anxiety. With proper coaching, blood sugar can come into balance and people can get off that roller coaster of energy ups and downs.

4) Balance the hormones:

The hormonal system is intricate and delicate. Proper functioning of the adrenals, thyroid, ovaries, testes, and pituitary glands are essential to achieving a good metabolism and healthy vitality. Many factors can cause imbalances in one or many of the hormonal glands. Excess stress not only affects the adrenal glands, but also the thyroid gland. Excess toxins in the body can affect the liver's ability to balance estrogen and progesterone resulting in PMS and other gynecological problems. Naturopathic doctors seek to balance the hormones by removing any underlying causes of dysfunction and using natural medicine to support the proper functioning of the glands.

5) Take stock of stress:

Stress is part of life, but too much stress can take it's toll on our bodies. We need to take stock of the amount of stress in our lives and also how we are handling it. Maybe it is time to ask some friends or colleagues for their feedback on how you are handling stress. Stress reduction techniques are an essential life tool that must be learned and practiced through out life. In the absence of constructive stress management skills, many people turn to destructive means of reducing stress like cigarettes, alcohol, excessive t.v., etc.

6) Exercise and Movement:

There is no better way to jump start your engine than getting your body moving! Our bodies require movement like they require food and sleep. If the thought of "exercise" brings back bad memories of gym class, think of incorporating "movement" into your life. Yoga, dance, walks, stretching and many more creative activities definitely will enhance your energy.

7) Take basic supplements:

There is abundant scientific research demonstrating that nutritional supplements are an important part of optimizing health. Nutritional deficiencies can definitely cause fatigue. For instance iron and B12 deficiencies both cause anemia that results in fatigue. A naturopathic physician can help you cut through the hype and design a basic supplement program that is right for your needs.

8) Drink water not caffeine:

Caffeine may give you a short term buzz, but it creates a long term depletion of your energy stores. Caffeine makes our bodies wired and stressed, not truly energized. Getting off stimulants is one of the keys to rebuilding your body to allow your true vitality to shine through. If you don't think you can get going in the morning without your cup of Joe, consider the next recommendation.

9) Take a dip in Comox Lake:

A great tip for increasing your energy is to finish your shower with a cold blast. Focusing the flow of water on your thyroid gland in the front of your neck, and the adrenal glands in your mid back area will really get the metabolism and energy going.

10) Take responsibility for creating joy in your life:

What are you passionate about? What brings you joy in your life? Who do you love? If these questions are difficult to answer, then it is time to do some soul searching. Without passion, joy and love in your life, it is hard to get excited and energized for your day. Do work you enjoy. Find ways to be of service. Develop an "attitude of gratitude" by taking time to focus on the good things in your life. Practice setting boundaries with negative people and surround yourself with people who are uplifting.

When it comes to energy, the old adage of "you reap what you sow" couldn't be more true. Investing in your health gives you the vitality to live the life you want.

To consult a naturopathic physician to design a plan to optimize your health and vitality contact Dr. Deidre Macdonald at the Macdonald Centre for Natural Medicine at 897-0235.