

Thriving Through the Afternoon:

Tips for Avoiding the Post-Lunch Slump



Here's the all-too-common scenario – you woke up feeling great and powered through a super productive morning, all while feeling like you could take on the world. Next up, you stop for lunch and carry on with your day for about an hour or so. Then BAM! All of the sudden, the energy you woke up with feels like it's been zapped out of your body and you're just not sure how you can possibly make it through the rest of the afternoon without an entire pot of coffee or an energy drink, both of which you already know are not great for your body (particularly at this point in the day).

We've all been there... it's a well-known phenomenon commonly referred to as the "afternoon slump." During this time, you may lack focus, struggle with attention to detail, become easily agitated, or just feel worn out.

But what's behind this drastic drop in our get-up-and-go? While scientists aren't certain, some experts believe our natural circadian rhythm is responsible. Others believe that a dip in our core body temperature is to blame, which signals the brain to release melatonin and make us sleepy. Surely, the siesta wasn't established as an afternoon ritual for no reason, but sadly, most of us just don't have the luxury of a mid-day nap.

While it's great to know you're not alone, preventing this feeling or at least knowing how to get through it is what you really need. That's why we've put together this handy guide

to help you power through your afternoons with the zeal and enthusiasm you need to be successful (or at least functional).

Top 5 Strategies for Preventing the Slump

What's better than learning how to power through the afternoon slump? Avoiding the feeling altogether. While no one is fully immune to these mid-afternoon woes, there are definite strategies that can help reduce your chances of hitting your wall somewhere between lunch and 5pm. Here's some sound advice to keep your energy and concentration levels high.



1. Get Your ZZZZs. This may seem obvious, but practicing good sleep habits and getting an adequate amount of sleep can help you avoid feeling overly groggy in the afternoon. According to the National Sleep Foundation, most adults need between 7 and 9 hours of sleep per night. Other tips for getting a good night's rest include sticking to a schedule and avoiding electronics at bedtime.

2. Start the Day with Exercise. According to a research study conducted at the University of Georgia, exercise is one of the best ways to fight fatigue. If



you're not in great shape or a regular gym-goer, not to worry. The study actually showed that low-intensity exercise had a greater impact on participants' energy levels, with those who exercised reporting a 65 percent drop in feelings of fatigue.

3. Eat for Energy. Diet plays a key role in your energy levels since a drop in blood glucose can cause you to become tired, anxious, and irritable. To avoid these fluctuations, stay away from carbohydrate-heavy meals like pancakes or pasta throughout the day. Similarly, meals and snacks that are high in fat can cause you to feel sluggish – a key symptom of the afternoon slump. Instead, start the day with a breakfast comprised of an equal blend of lean protein and complex carbohydrates such as eggs with steel cut



oatmeal. For lunch, look for a similar, light blend of healthy carbohydrates and protein to avoid feeling stuffed – which can also contribute to a serious mid-day slump. Ideal snack options include a handful of nuts or veggies and hummus. Options such as flavored yogurt (often packed with sugar!) or fruit with a high glycemic index (watermelon, pineapple) can increase the chance of blood sugar fluctuations, so they're best to avoid.

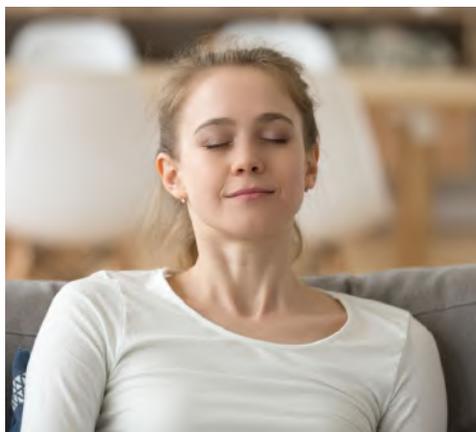


4. Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate.

If you want to maintain a pep in your step all day, make sure you're well hydrated. Even slight dehydration can cause you to feel sluggish, tired, and cranky. Carry a refillable water cup or thermos with you throughout the day and sip on it regularly. If you easily tire of water, add some fresh citrus fruit or sip on herbal tea to change it up a bit. Drinking milk with each meal or as a snack can also help keep you hydrated. Remember that coffee and alcohol are diuretics (meaning they can contribute to dehydration), so avoiding these beverages can also help you prevent hitting that afternoon slump. Make sure you're drinking half your body weight in ounces of water each day!



5. Draw on Other People's Energy. It's much easier to succumb to the slump if you're isolated. A great way to avoid the afternoon energy zap is to surround yourself with other people's energy during those precarious mid-day hours. Scheduling your meetings in the afternoon can allow you to stay energized by interacting with others. If you're an introvert or don't have the opportunity to work with others, save either your most exciting tasks (which may boost your energy!) or those that don't require much focus for the afternoon.



6. Breathe Deeply. While we're all breathing all the time, very often we're taking rapid, shallow breaths. This can be due to stress or just hard-to-break habits, but this kind of ineffective breathing has

an impact on multiple body systems that can lead to lack of energy. If your brain isn't getting enough oxygen, it slows down (cue sleepiness). Similarly, if your heart isn't getting enough oxygen, your circulation suffers, which can lead to feelings of fatigue. Practice slow, deep breathing techniques to ensure you're getting the oxygen you need to stay alert and focused throughout the day.

Top Tips for Boosting Your Energy

While your best intentions are most likely to avoid the slump altogether, chances are you'll be faced with an afternoon where you just can't seem to avoid it. In these instances, here's a list of tactics to help you get your groove back so you can get on with your afternoon.

- **Get a Move On.** Increasing your heart rate is a great way to get your blood flowing and to renew your energy. A short walk, a simple stretching routine, or a few sets of barbell lifts can give you the reset you need to march on through the end of the day.



• **Get Centered.** Meditation is a simple, natural way to invigorate your mind and body when you're feeling sluggish. The deep breaths you'll take will help your cells get the energy they need to sustain you, and the conscious break will give your mind a better ability to focus when you return to your routine.

• **Be Chatty.** Connecting with your favorite co-workers, friends, or family can help provide a much-needed energy boost. Take a trip to the water cooler or your favorite co-worker's desk, or make a phone call to a friend or family member – start with a few questions about what's going on in their lives and you'll be feeding off their energy in no time.

• **Try Aromatherapy.** The use of certain essential oils is another effective way to quickly reinvigorate yourself. Try a dab of peppermint oil on the back of your neck or your palm and breathe it in deeply. Other great options for energy include eucalyptus oil, basil oil, rosemary oil, or any citrus oil (lemon, grapefruit, orange).



• **Take a Mental Break.**

Whether it's taking a few moments to tidy up around your home or office or spending a few minutes reading or watching something funny, giving your brain a break can be just the thing you need to get back on track.

• **Have a Jam Session.** If you find yourself struggling to make it through the day, it may just be time to turn on your favorite song or album. Listen, sing along, maybe even bust out a dance move or two. When you head back to the task at hand, you'll be refreshed and re-energized.

• **EnLIGHTen Yourself.** Get some sunshine! Walking outside on a sunny day is believed to improve your mood, energy level, and ability to focus.

• **Take a Sip.** Drinking a cup of herbal tea can provide a natural energy boost that you won't get from coffee, which can actually lead to more fatigue once the caffeine wears off. Blends known for offering the biggest boost include green tea, yerba mate, ginger, peppermint, or licorice teas. While feeling sluggish in the afternoon is perfectly natural, let's face it – we've all got things to do! Making a plan for avoiding afternoon fatigue and feeling confident that you can beat it when it inevitably hits can help you stay powerful and energetic, regardless of the time of day.



Sources

[Afternoon Energy Boosters](#)
(WebMD)

[Why the mid-afternoon slump kicks in and how to fight it](#)
(Sleep.org)

[10 Healthy Foods that Boost Energy](#)
(Everyday Health)