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10 Tips to Beat the Afternoon Slump and Stay Energized

It's 2 p.m. and you're staring at your computer, struggling to focus. Your eyelids feel heavy, you're yawning every five seconds and you only want a date with your bed (STAT!).

The dreaded afternoon slump has hit you like a freight train, making getting through the rest of your day feel impossible. The good news is that there are a few ways to fight it and get your energy back.

Why do you feel so tired in the afternoon?

The afternoon slump isn't just in your head. According to Kristen Kern, a registered dietitian with Banner Health, it's a biological response.

"An afternoon slump is part of our body's internal clock or circadian rhythm, which regulates our wakefulness/sleepiness over 24 hours," she said. "This naturally dips midday when melatonin (a hormone that promotes sleep) is released, causing sleepiness typically between 1-3 p.m."

Other factors that can contribute to your midday slump are:

- **Poor sleep:** If you didn't get enough deep sleep the night before, your body will struggle to stay energized. Even if you get the right number of hours, poor sleep quality can leave you feeling exhausted.
- **Dehydration:** [Not drinking enough water](#) can make you feel tired and foggy.
- **Lack of movement:** Sitting too long slows down circulation, reducing oxygen flow to the brain. This makes you feel more tired than you actually are.
- **Lunch choices:** "If you eat a lunch high in simple carbohydrates (like white bread, pasta or sugary snacks), your blood sugar levels spike and then crash," Kern said. "This crash can leave you feeling sluggish and unfocused."
- **Caffeine crash:** That morning coffee might give you a boost, but it can also cause an energy dip later.
- **Medications or medical conditions:** Certain medications, like antihistamines, antidepressants or blood pressure medications, can cause drowsiness. Underlying medical conditions, such as anemia, thyroid disorders or diabetes, can also contribute to afternoon fatigue.

If your tiredness feels extreme or doesn't improve, it's worth checking with your health care provider.

10 ways to beat the afternoon slump

Now that you know why this phenomenon happens, here are some ways to stop it.

1. Reevaluate your breakfast and lunch

What you eat at breakfast and lunch greatly affects how you feel later in the day. Instead of carb-heavy meals, try ones packed with protein, fiber and healthy fats. Kern shared some great choices.

Breakfast ideas:

- Oatmeal or Greek yogurt with fresh fruits and nuts/seeds
- Vegetable omelet with whole wheat toast
- Avocado toast and fruit

Lunch ideas:

- Vegetable/lentil soup
- Mixed salad with chicken and hardboiled eggs
- Tuna/chicken salad on whole wheat bread

"These foods keep your blood sugar stable and help you avoid the mid-afternoon crash," Kern said.

[Check out this article](#) about small changes that can nudge you toward healthier eating.

2. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate!

Dehydration is a sneaky cause of tiredness. If you're feeling sluggish, drink some water. Keep a water bottle at your desk and sip throughout the day.

"Drinking plenty of water and [sipping on antioxidant teas](#) will help keep energy levels up," Kern said.

3. Move your body

"[Move your body regularly](#). Make it a habit to stand, stretch, or walk around every hour," Kern said. "This gets your blood flowing and wakes you up."

You can:

- Take a 5-minute walk outside. Exposure to natural light helps regulate your body's clock and keeps you alert. If possible, step outside for a few minutes, open a window or position your desk near natural light.
- Stretch at your desk.
- Do 10 jumping jacks or squats.
- Stand up and do a few shoulder rolls.

4. Power nap (the right way!)

A short nap (10 to 20 minutes) can recharge your brain without making you feel groggy. Set an alarm and close your eyes for a quick refresh, if possible. Just don't nap too long or you might feel even sleepier.

5. Optimize your caffeine intake

Your morning cup of joe is great, but if you're feeling groggy midday, it might be time to adjust your caffeine habits. Try:

- Spacing out smaller doses of caffeine instead of having one big cup
- Switching to green tea, which has a gentler caffeine boost and contains L-theanine, an amino acid that promotes focus
- Avoiding caffeine after 2 p.m. to prevent sleep issues later

6. Use aromatherapy for a quick refresh

Certain scents, such as peppermint, citrus and rosemary, can improve focus and alertness. [Diffuse oils](#) in your workspace or dab a few drops on your wrists and inhale deeply.

7. Try deep breathing or meditation

If you feel mentally drained, a few minutes of deep breathing can help lower stress and improve focus. Try this simple technique:

- Breathe in deeply for four seconds
- Hold for four seconds
- Exhale slowly for four seconds
- Repeat for a minute or two

8. Snack smart

If you need an [afternoon snack](#), choose one that gives you lasting energy. "The best snacks include protein, fiber and healthy fats," Kern said. She shared some options:

- Yogurt
- Hummus with vegetables
- Avocado
- Fruit with nuts
- Trail mix
- Cheese with whole grain crackers
- Hardboiled eggs
- Cottage cheese
- Apple or banana with peanut butter
- Fiber-rich cereal with milk
- Jerky
- String cheese
- A square of dark chocolate

9. Listen to upbeat music

A fun playlist can work wonders when you need a quick energy boost. Fast-paced music can help you feel more awake and motivated.

10. Prioritize sleep

Getting enough high-quality sleep is one of the most effective ways to prevent the afternoon slump. Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep each night and [establish a consistent sleep routine](#). Avoid screens before bed, keep your bedroom cool and dark and try relaxation techniques to improve sleep quality.

The bottom line

The afternoon slump doesn't have to ruin your productivity. By making small changes – eating the right foods, staying hydrated, moving more and taking breaks – you can stay energized and focused all day.