

Recharge Here

Skip the Red Bull. Step away from the 5-Hour Energy. We'll show you the smartest ways to power up when your reserves are running low

BY CINDY KUZMA • PHOTOGRAPHS BY IAN ALLEN



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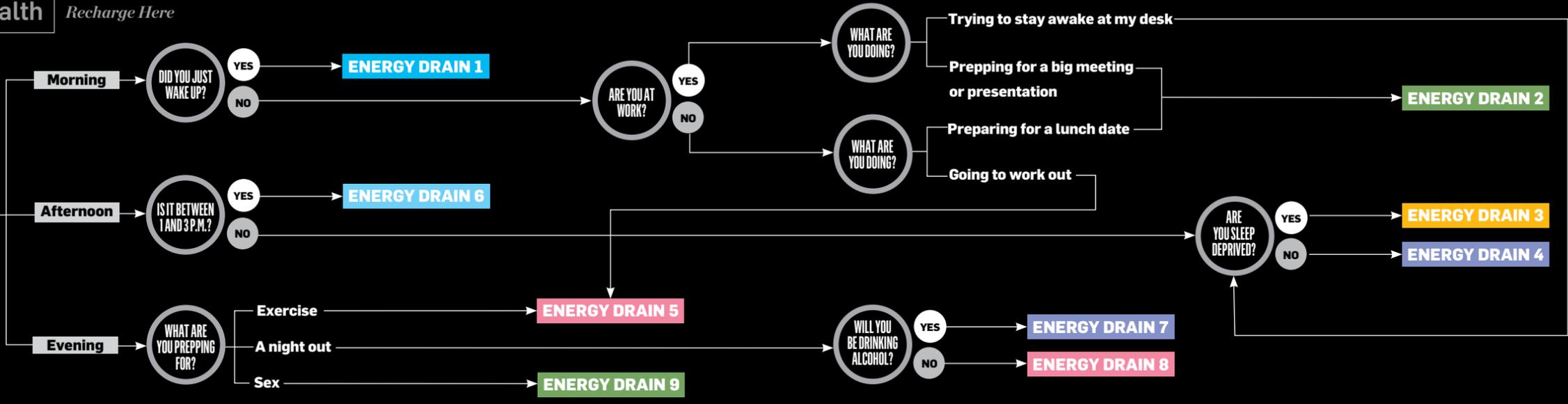
THIS HALLOWEEN, TRY OUT

a really original costume: You, dressed as a man who's rested, refreshed, and bursting with energy. Trust us—no one will ever recognize you.

Ah, if it were only that simple. But there's no disguising the fact that fall is the sleepy season, thanks to the effect of diminishing daylight hours on your body. As the sun sets earlier and earlier each day, your levels of sleep-inducing melatonin begin rising sooner, says John Caldwell, Ph.D., a psychologist who has researched fatigue for NASA and the U.S. military. This can make you feel drowsy well before bedtime. Add to that the usual daily dose of work stress, a less-than-perfect diet, a chronic shortage of shut-eye, and hours gazing at glowing touchscreens, and it's a wonder you're not facedown at your desk by noon.

If that's the trick, here's the treat: simple, expert-approved strategies to help you power through your day. Just try to keep your eyes open long enough to follow our flowchart, and you'll find the solution best suited to your type of tired. ▶

WHAT TIME OF DAY IS IT?



ENERGY DRAIN 1

You might be paying penance for too much pinot noir—or you might just be suffering from something called sleep inertia. This grogginess and disorientation you experience upon waking—which is especially severe if your alarm has interrupted deep sleep—can be as crippling as intoxication, according to a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. That's because your barely awake brain needs time to reboot and bring its signals back up to speed after sleep. "It will probably take you 30 to 45 minutes to shake off the grogginess," says Caldwell.



FIGHT IT Drink cold water

Chugging ice water and splashing it on your face can speed the transition from comatose to conscious. "Cold triggers the stimulating hormone adrenaline," says internist Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., the author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic!* This helps your heart pump stronger, boosting bloodflow to your brain. Another benefit: Drinking water revives shriveled cells after hours of sleep-induced dehydration, which is known to cause tiredness.

ENERGY DRAIN 2

Your body responds to serious work and relationship stress the same way it would to a grizzly attack—by cranking out the fight-or-flight hormone cortisol. "This raises energy levels initially, but your body can't keep up with the cortisol demand," says integrative physician Alicia Stanton, M.D., the author of *Hormone Harmony*. The effect: Your cortisol plummets—and you tank just when you need to be on top of your game.



FIGHT IT Drink green tea

Don't drain the coffeepot. The megadose of caffeine will only leave you anxious and jittery, says nutritionist Jonny Bowden, Ph.D., C.N.S., author of *The 150 Most Effective Ways to Boost Your Energy*. Green tea, however, has just enough caffeine to boost production of the hormone adrenocorticotropic, which triggers the release of cortisol. It also contains EGCG, a flavonoid that promotes focus and calmness, Australian scientists say. To achieve Don Draper smoothness, grab a glass about 90 minutes before you need it to kick in. "Green tea takes longer to hit than coffee does," says Bowden.

ENERGY DRAIN 3

There's a reason your eyelids feel like they have anvils on them. "Your body is not a machine," says Matthew Edlund, M.D., director of the Center for Circadian Medicine in Florida and author of *The Power of Rest*. "It's an organism that's being continuously renewed and rebuilt." Much of this regeneration, including growth of new heart and brain cells, takes place during sleep. If you consistently log less than you need, your body becomes increasingly insistent that you pay off your sleep debt, says Caldwell. Add to that the monotony of staring at spreadsheets, and the need for z's becomes curl-under-your-desk urgent.



FIGHT IT Take a b.s. break

Can't catnap in your car? Go visit your office buddy. In one of Caldwell's NASA studies, sleep-deprived participants acted more alert after taking a 7-minute break to chat. The simple act of ungluing your rear from your chair helps too: In a recent study from the Aeromedical Research Laboratory, fatigued folks performed better on an alertness test when they took it standing instead of sitting.

ENERGY DRAIN 4

How was breakfast? "Your morning meal sets the stage for the way your blood sugar behaves the rest of the day," says Dr. Stanton. If you skip it entirely, you deprive your brain and muscles of energizing glucose. Or if you grab a refined-carbohydrate meal, like a bagel, you'll experience a brief sugar spike but then inevitably crash. When insulin rushes in, it helps clear sugar, but it also sends a signal to your adrenal glands to stop producing cortisol properly, says endocrinologist Eva Cwynar, M.D., author of *The Fatigue Solution*. This can trigger a wave of exhaustion known as "adrenal fatigue."



FIGHT IT Munch on protein

Grab a snack with at least 10 grams of protein—two hard-boiled eggs, say—to produce a steady rise in blood sugar and energy levels, counteracting a postcarb crash. "Protein causes a peptide called CCK to be released in your gut. It satiates you and stabilizes your cortisol and insulin levels for hours," says Dr. Cwynar. Even if you ate a solid breakfast, a shot of protein can still help you power through the morning.

ENERGY DRAIN 5

Your feeling of exhaustion may be all in your head. In a recent Welsh study, cyclists who felt mentally fatigued stopped pushing themselves sooner than those who felt refreshed did, even though both groups' cardiovascular and muscular responses to exercise were the same. Brain drain may increase activity in the anterior cingulate cortex, an area of your brain in which motivation, emotion, and perception of physical effort converge, the researchers say.



FIGHT IT Cue up your iPod

Cranking LMFAO does more than just motivate you; it can also boost your exercise performance. "People listening to music can run about 15 percent longer," Dr. Edlund says. The benefit extends beyond endurance: A recent study from California State University at Fullerton found that people who listened to tunes they liked performed squat jumps more quickly and forcefully. Use the PacedDJ app (\$2, pacedj.com) to create a cardio mix of songs with tempos that range from 125 to 140 beats a minute. Then, when you lift, switch to a motivating playlist.

Illustrations by RAMI NIEMI

ENERGY DRAIN 6

You were tearing through your to-do list before lunch, but now you can barely move your mouse. That's because you've become mired in the circadian trough—also known as the afternoon slump—which typically strikes somewhere between 1 and 3 p.m. "Your levels of cortisol (the get-up-and-go hormone) are high in the morning but then drop in the afternoon," says Bowden. Also at play are your levels of melatonin, the sleep hormone, which begin to rise around this time.



FIGHT IT Bask in the light

To stay out of the trough, join the blues brothers. In a 2011 Swiss study, men who parked themselves in the glow of bulbs that emitted blue light produced less sleep-inducing melatonin. Purchase a compact fluorescent bulb marked "6500K"—an indication of cool light, which includes blue waves—and install it in one of your desk lamps. Turn the lamp on around lunchtime, and leave it shining until 5 p.m. "This will stabilize your circadian rhythms and even improve your sleep later on," says study author Christian Cajochen, Ph.D.

ENERGY DRAIN 7

Don't stop at a java joint on your way to the bar. Combining alcohol and caffeine can increase risk-taking behavior, possibly because the latter blunts the depressant effect of the former, according to a Cedars Sinai Medical Center review. Plus, the stimulating effect of caffeine may mask the feeling of being drunk. Mixing the two could reduce your ability to gauge your own intoxication, making you more likely to overdo it. When the energizing effects wear off, you'll be sloshed and sleep deprived—a potentially lethal combination, says Dr. Edlund.



FIGHT IT Take a power nap

Head, meet pillow. Just make sure you set your alarm: A 2011 study from Ireland showed that when you doze late in the day, you're more likely to descend into slow-wave sleep, which if interrupted can bring on sleep inertia (see Energy Drain 1). So limit your nap to 10 to 20 minutes. Recent Australian research found that this interval is brief enough to keep you out of the slow-wave zone while still allowing sufficient time for the sleep to work its magic.

ENERGY DRAIN 8

While you may think you're a free man, you're really a slave to your circadian rhythms. See, your body is going to command you to start winding down about an hour before your regular bedtime. "You're tired because your cortisol drops. It's meant to be low so you can fall asleep before your regular bedtime. Your cortisol drops. It's meant to be low so you can fall asleep before your regular bedtime. "You're tired because your cortisol drops. It's meant to be low so you can fall asleep before your regular bedtime. "You're tired because your cortisol drops. It's meant to be low so you can fall asleep before your regular bedtime."



FIGHT IT Chew gum

Caffeinated gum is what the U.S. Army hands out to its combat soldiers, so it should be more than sufficient for your duties as wingman or DD. For a boost that lasts 3 to 4 hours, says Caldwell, go with gum that has 100 to 200 milligrams of caffeine, such as Stay Alert Caffeine Energy Gum (\$8/six-pack, stayalertgum.com). Gum is an even more efficient caffeine delivery system than coffee: "You release all the caffeine in about a minute," Caldwell says. "It's rapidly absorbed into your bloodstream through the blood vessels in your mouth and throat."

ENERGY DRAIN 9

Your body is swimming in hormones—except it's low tide for testosterone. Your T levels peak in the morning (the reason for your morning erection) and then significantly drop in the evening, says Scott Isaacs, M.D., an Emory University endocrinologist. This hormonal decline can cause your sex drive to take a nosedive, he says. What's more, it can affect your overall stamina: "Testosterone is one of the most potent energy boosters men have," notes Dr. Cwynar.



FIGHT IT Hit the gym

Lift iron to raise wood. "Men who work out regularly have higher testosterone and better performance in bed," says Dr. Isaacs. A higher baseline level of the hormone means the nighttime slump will be less pronounced—and less likely to impact your sex life. Your T rises after just one workout, so exercise in the evening before a hot date. Keep it to about 30 minutes of weights or an hour of weights and cardio; going longer or doing only aerobic exercise may blunt your testosterone response, a 2012 study from Spain found.

NIGHT OWL NO MORE

Say good night to your nocturnal existence

The same hormone that helps you perform in the sack can hinder the other bedroom activity: sleep. German scientists found that testosterone may predispose men to being night owls. Why? The master clock in your brain has male-hormone receptors; when T binds to them, it can shift your clock to a later schedule, says study author Christoph Randler, Ph.D. Combine conking out late with waking early for work, and you're looking at serious sleep deprivation. It's time to reclaim the night.

LOOSEN UP AT LUNCH

You don't want to mess with your T, but you can lower your cortisol, a stress hormone that peaks later in night owls, says Michael Thorpy, M.D., of the Sleep-Wake Disorders Center in New York City. The trick? Twenty minutes of tensing and releasing your muscles at lunchtime. This can lead to lower cortisol levels, say German researchers.

POUR A WARM ONE

When levels of the sleep hormone melatonin rise, your temperature drops, initiating sleep. If you're a night owl, your melatonin spike starts later—which is where the power of warm milk comes in. It causes a spike and then a significant decrease in body temperature, says *MH* sleep advisor W. Christopher Winter, M.D.

RETHINK WEEKENDS

The only way to break your night-owl cycle is to stick to your weekday schedule on weekends, says Dr. Winter. Since you don't have the threat of being late to work, set up a reward for rolling out of bed—a special breakfast, say. Eventually you'll start waking up earlier on your own. —JORDAN SWARD