

February 2002 Vol. 54, No. 2  
**PREVENTION**



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COVER PHOTOGRAPHER Hilmar MODEL Narda Singh/Elite Toronto  
 HAIR Bruce Lee Ent/Wilhelmina Miami MAKEUP Marcie Lakin/Wilhelmina Miami

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**98 Double Your Energy!**

What's going to perk you up will surprise you!  
 by Carol Krucoff

# DOUBLE YOUR ENERGY!

# 10

*Easy ways  
 to rev up and  
 feel fantastic!*

by Carol Krucoff

**In our 24/7 world,** 40 million Americans suffer from sleep disorders, and more than half of all adults report feeling high stress every day. So if you find yourself feeling like your battery's been drained, you're certainly not alone.

But if you think it's because you don't get enough sleep or have too much to do, you may be pinning your fatigue on the wrong bad habit. Surprisingly, few people recognize that one of the main reasons for their personal energy crisis is the lack of exercise, says James S. Gordon, MD, director of the Center for Mind-Body Medicine in Washington, DC, and chairman of the White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy.

"Everyone's always rushing, often under great pressure, so they feel like they're doing a lot," says Dr. Gordon, who prescribes a daily dose of physical activity for all his patients. "But in fact,

PHOTOGRAPH BY HILMAR



## DOUBLE YOUR ENERGY!

we live in an extremely sedentary society. Most people get very little physical activity and hold a tremendous amount of tension in their body—all of which is exhausting." Although it may seem contradictory, **expending energy can actually increase your energy.** (See "How Exercise Fires You Up" on p. 103.)

So the next time you think you're too tired to exercise, think again. Instead of reaching for a caffeine pick-me-up, try one of these easy, energy-enhancing moves instead.

### 1. Breathe from Your Belly

"People are so overwhelmed by everything they think they must do that they rarely take time to just breathe," says Monica Myklebust, MD, a family physician in the Program in Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona in Tucson. "Proper breathing helps quiet body and mind, which can shift our perspective and refresh the spirit."

Yet many people in Western society don't breathe correctly, she says. Taught to suck in our guts and puff out our chests, we're a nation of shallow "chest breathers." Few people—other than musicians and some athletes—are even aware that the abdomen should expand during inhalation to allow maximum expansion of the lungs.

Taking a deep belly breath is a surefire way to invigorate body and mind anytime throughout the day, says Dr. Myklebust.

**How to do it:** Sit in a comfortable chair with your legs uncrossed and spine tall. Breathe in slowly through your nose so



#1 Focus on a beautiful flower, and breathe from your belly.

that the air completely fills your lungs all the way down into your belly, expanding your abdomen. Breathe out slowly through your nose. Inhale to the count of three (1, 2, 3), then exhale to the count of two (4, 5). Breathe in smooth cycles without pausing. Start with 2 minutes of breathwork, and work up to 5 to 10 minutes, with 12 breath cycles per minute. If desired, focus on a candle, flower, or meaningful picture, or play music to enhance your practice.

### 2. Get Fit in Bits

"Physical fitness is the cornerstone of energy," contends Connie Tyne, executive director of The Cooper Wellness Program in Dallas, a sort of summer camp for grown-ups where participants learn how to integrate healthy habits

## DOUBLE YOUR ENERGY!

### 4. Move in the Light

"One reason for the fatigue that is rampant in our society may be light deprivation," explains Michael Terman, PhD, director of clinical chronobiology at the New York State Psychiatric Institute in New York City. Research suggests that exposure to artificial bright light therapy in the early morning can boost energy throughout the day, notes Dr. Terman.

Walking, jogging, or doing any form of exercise in sunlight boosts this energy-enhancing power, he says. While exposure to sunlight anytime can provide a pick-me-up, Dr. Terman explains that "the dawn signal has a particularly strong therapeutic effect."

**How to do it:** Do some form of movement outdoors for 30 to 45 minutes; if possible, get moving as soon as you can after waking up. Even a cloudy day offers enough light photons to have a stimulating effect on the brain.

### 5. Sit Pretty

America's epidemic of neck, shoulder, and back pain results from being "a nation of slouchers," says Hope Gillerman, spokeswoman for the American Society for the Alexander Technique in Florence, MA. This technique is a form of movement therapy that helps people relieve pain by correcting their body's alignment.

Hunched over steering wheels and computer keyboards, people can develop a round-shouldered posture that forces them to tighten muscles to support the



#4 Move it outside—sunlight is also a great pick-me-up.

head, which weighs 10 to 15 lb. Gillerman notes that "most people are locked into habitual patterns of tension and strain that cause them to use way more force and energy than necessary." Try the following exercise, based on a lesson of the Alexander Technique.

**How to do it:** Sit on the front edge of a chair with both feet flat on the floor and your body weight evenly distributed on your two pelvic sitting bones. Clasp your hands with fingers interlocked, and lift your arms overhead, palms to the ceiling. Stretch your spine up while keeping your gaze forward. Release your hands as you relax your arms down by your sides, keeping the spine lengthened. Exhale completely, inhale gently, then exhale again as you relax the muscles of your



shoulders, arms, neck, face, and back.

For information on the Alexander Technique, call (800) 473-0620; in Canada, call (416) 631-8127. For a link to their Web site, go to [www.prevention.com/links](http://www.prevention.com/links).

## 6. Give Yourself a Tap

"Modern life assaults us with conditions that tend to drain our energies and push them out of balance," says Donna Eden, president of the nonprofit Energy Medicine Institute in Ashland, OR. Eden and others in this emerging field say that the body is comprised of subtle energy systems designed to keep us healthy. "You can learn skills for keeping your energies flowing in a vibrant harmony that fosters your good health," she says.

**How to do it:** If you're struggling to get out of bed in the morning, Eden suggests massaging your ears. "Gently tug around the tops, and pull along the lobes," she says. "This will stimulate acupuncture points, tiny electromagnetic reservoirs on the skin that will open you up to the energies of the new day."

For an energy boost at your droopy time of day, Eden advises tapping or massaging three acupuncture spots: the K-27 points, located about an inch below the center of your collarbone, in the slight indentations formed below the bone; the thymus point, located in the center of the sternum, or breastbone; and the spleen points, located on the ribs just below each breast. Tap or massage each spot for about 15 to 20 seconds, breathing deeply as you do.

## How Exercise Fires You Up

► **Relieves tension and keeps you alert.** Walking, stretching, and other forms of movement help relieve muscle tension and send oxygenated blood to the brain and other vital organs.

► **Builds stamina.** Regular exercise boosts the efficiency of the heart and lungs, making the tasks of daily life easier and less tiring.

► **Keeps you slim.** Physically active people are less likely to gain excess pounds that can literally weigh them down.

► **Helps you sleep.** Studies show that fit people sleep better, fall asleep quicker, wake up less often, and experience more delta sleep—the deepest sleep of the night, which promotes the greatest amount of body recovery.

► **Keeps you healthy.** Regular physical activity can help prevent and relieve a host of energy-draining ailments, from the common cold to certain cancers.

► **Improves mood.** Exercise rids the body of stress hormones, brightening mood and relieving feelings of depression and anxiety.



## 7. Try Yoga

Yoga stretches can wake up a tired body, especially if you've been sitting too long, says Sara Ivanhoe, a Santa Monica, CA, yoga instructor, star of the video *Yoga for Dummies*, and president of [yoganation.com](http://yoganation.com). "Poses that open the chest, such as back bends, are especially invigorating, because they expand breathing capacity

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their emotions, and bring a profound sense of joy," she explains. "But we need to forget the Western, military approach to exercise, which is all about harder, faster, higher." Instead, adopt a more Eastern view of "mindful exercise," picking any form of movement you enjoy and find nourishing. "For many people, this is dance," Gorrell says. "Almost every culture dances as part of ritual and art, so it's almost encoded in our DNA."

**How to do it:** Play music you like, Gorrell suggests, moving your body to the rhythm in whatever way it needs. For example, if you're angry, you may want to stomp around and punch pillows. If you're sad, you may want to sway and pulse. Expressing emotions through your body can relieve and refresh your mind.

## 10. Rest—With Intensity

"Too often when we're tired, we reach for something—such as food or coffee—to cover it up," says Judith Hanson Lasater, PhD, a San Francisco physical therapist and yoga instructor who holds a doctorate in East-West psychology. "But what we really need at times like that is to give in to the fatigue so we can release it."

Taking as little as 5 to 10 minutes "to do a period of intense nothing" or deep relaxation can be tremendously restorative, says Dr. Lasater, who presents varied yoga postures that encourage deep rest in her book, *Relax and Renew*



**#9** Nothing invigorates your body like swaying to a fun beat.

(Rodmell Press, 1995).

**How to do it:** One of Dr. Lasater's simplest strategies is to set a timer; then give yourself permission to "stop doing and just be" until the timer goes off.

**Lie on your back—with your legs resting up on a wall if you'd like—and relax all of your muscles, letting the weight of your body melt into the floor. Take deep abdominal breaths, and totally give yourself over to the experience of letting go. •**



Carol Krucoff is the coauthor, with Mitchell Krucoff, MD, of *Healing Moves: How to Cure, Relieve, and Prevent Common Ailments with Exercise* (Harmony Books, 2000).

DOUBLE YOUR ENERGY!

and stimulate the nervous system. And some inversions, in which the head is lower than the heart, boost energy by sending blood to the brain."

**How to do it:** An easy yoga chest opener and gentle inversion is the "puppy dog," a modification of the classic "downward facing dog." Stand facing a wall, and place your hands against the wall at about hip height. Walk backward until your back is parallel to the floor and your body creates a sort of box with the walls and floor. Relax your head, and press your palms into the wall with your fingers spread wide and your middle finger pointing toward the ceiling. Soften your knees, and extend your tailbone up. Take a few deep breaths as you focus on lengthening your spine, then release.

## 8. Laugh It Up

"Laughter is like internal jogging," wrote author Norman Cousins in his classic book, *Anatomy of an Illness*. Cousins used humor to help heal himself from a debilitating disease. He found that 10 minutes of belly laughter (brought on by watching comedies such as *Candid Camera*) gave him 2 hours of pain-free sleep.

Scientific evidence now supports laughter's healing and energizing power, according to Joel Goodman, director of The Humor Project, Inc., in Saratoga Springs, NY. "A good laugh has many positive physiologic effects," he contends, "such as boosting immune function, enhancing respiration, and



**#8** Laughter in the great outdoors: Jumping on a bike can make you feel like a kid.

lowering levels of stress hormones."

**How to do it:** For a quick energizer, try a 3- to 5-minute laughter meditation, suggests Goodman. Or chuckle with a buddy, because laughter's contagious. Or create a "mirth aid kit" with books, videos, and funny props, so you can administer a dose of hilarity whenever you need a shot of humor. For information, visit [www.prevention.com/links](http://www.prevention.com/links) to get to The Humor Project's Web site.

## 9. Dance for Joy

When people say they're too tired to exercise, their fatigue is often emotional rather than physical, says Rebecca Gorrell, a movement therapist at Canyon Ranch Health Resort in Tucson. "Movement can help people shift their energy, stabilize