

What's Making Me Tired?

Nodding off? One of these culprits may be behind that tired feeling.

Diet: Going long periods without eating, and then overeating, can make you feel tired as blood sugar levels spike and then fall. Consuming sugar or caffeine may give you a quick energy burst, but a crash will follow it. Eat small, regular meals and consume more fruits, vegetables, protein (e.g., lean meats, fatty fish, nuts) and whole grains to avoid blood sugar highs and lows.



Health issues: Conditions such as arthritis, allergies, thyroid problems, asthma, type 2 diabetes and other conditions can make you feel tired. So can mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. Talk with your health care provider to find out what's causing your tiredness and discuss treatment options.

Medications: Medicines to treat conditions, such as pain, heart disease, high blood pressure, depression and allergies, can make you feel tired. Discuss potential side effects and dosage with your provider or pharmacist.

Lack of exercise: Increasing physical activity will boost energy levels. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise (such as brisk walking) per week. This will also help you to reach and maintain a healthy weight — and carrying too many extra pounds is yet another cause of tiredness.

Too little sleep: Perhaps the simplest cause of feeling tired is lack of sleep. Avoid skimping on sleep and trying to catch up on weekends or days off. Instead, strive for 7 to 9 hours daily, and supplement with naps.

Night Shift Notes

When you work nights and sleep days, your body's circadian rhythm can get disrupted. This may cause some physical and mental phenomena as the night wears on, such as:



Chills: Your body temperature drops starting between 11 p.m. and midnight, reaching its lowest point between 4 to 5 a.m. Wear layered clothing so you can easily adjust to body temperature shifts.

Hallucinations: Your body's temperature drop can bring about strange symptoms, such as peripheral hallucinations — seeing objects out of the corner of your eye that aren't there. Make sure you give everything, including your work,

a second glance. If possible, take an exercise or snack break and rest your eyes around 4 a.m., especially if you're driving.

Feeling sluggish: As your body gets colder, you may react more slowly and your risk for injuries may increase. If possible, perform complex tasks early in your shift while you are warmest and most alert. Always take precautions during your shift.

STOP Food Cravings

It's 3 a.m., and you can't get comfort food out of your mind. Whether you crave chocolate, doughnuts or salty potato chips, learning to control cravings is key to maintaining a healthy weight and feeling well. How to beat cravings:

Eat frequently. Going more than 5 hours without eating can lead you to seek out comfort foods high in refined carbohydrates, fat (saturated and trans) and sugar. Eat small, frequent, healthy snacks that contain some protein to keep you feeling full and satisfied longer.



Drink water. Drinking water will help you feel full while the craving passes. Also, dehydration can worsen food cravings.



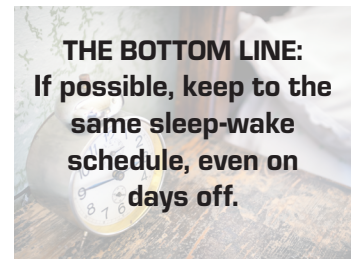
Distract yourself. Find something to do besides eating. Get up and stretch, walk, engage in a hobby, switch to a more challenging task, or call a friend.

Control portions. Pack a single portion of a food you crave so you don't eat the whole box. Or, buy a small amount of something special, and truly savor it. For example, if you crave chocolate, have a small piece instead of a large candy bar.



Know your triggers. Record when you have cravings, the type of food you crave, what was happening at the time (e.g., hectic schedule) and how you felt (e.g., bored or stressed). Identifying craving patterns can help you eat better in the future.

THE BOTTOM LINE:
If possible, keep to the same sleep-wake schedule, even on days off.



It's a Stretch

Stretching feels good. That alone might be enough reason to add stretching to your day. Stretching has many other benefits, including:

It keeps muscles limber and decreases stiffness.

It reduces injury risk. Flexible muscles are less likely to get strained or torn during work, exercise or daily activities.

It improves posture. Stretching the muscles in your back, shoulders and chest helps keep your spine and your body properly aligned.

It reduces stress. Stretching releases tension from the muscles, helping you feel relaxed.

It increases blood flow to muscles. This can help lower your risk of injuries when doing physical work or exercising, and can help protect your joints as you age.

How to stretch:

- ✓ Exercise for 5 to 10 minutes before stretching. Never stretch cold muscles.
- ✓ Stretch major muscle groups, such as your calves, hamstrings, thighs, lower back, neck and shoulders.
- ✓ Always stretch both sides of your body equally.
- ✓ Stretch smoothly and evenly, without bouncing or jerking.
- ✓ Hold stretches for 10 to 30 seconds.
- ✓ Stretch so that you feel a slight tension in the muscle, but not so that you feel pain.

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends stretching 2 or 3 days per week, and you should do it daily if you have muscle stiffness or have lost range of motion in a joint.



People who kept a daily food journal lost twice as much weight in 6 months as those who didn't, according to a Kaiser Permanente study. A food diary can show you:

Why you eat – You might reach for food because you are upset, lonely, tired, bored or anxious. You might also eat more when you are at a restaurant or with certain people.

How much you eat – Eating is often mindless, especially if you eat while watching TV, working, conversing, or doing other activities. A food diary will help you keep track.

How long you eat for – Once you start tracking your eating, you will notice if you are eating too quickly, which can lead you to consume more calories before you feel full.

How what you're eating differs from what you think – You might believe you eat enough vegetables and fruit, or that you don't eat many sweets. Your food diary shows you where you need to improve and what you're doing well.

To start a food diary, record in an app (or write down) what you eat and drink, how much, the time, where you are, whether you are alone or with someone, what you are doing while you eat, and your mood. Over time, you can use your diary to improve your eating habits and even share it with your health care provider.



Relaxation Matters

Today's 24-hour world can lead to too little rest and too much stress. Take time today to relax and recharge 3 ways:

- 1 **Imagine yourself in a peaceful, pleasant scene.** Then, focus on relaxing your body in that visualization. For example, you might concentrate on how warm and heavy your legs and arms feel in the summer sunlight at the beach.
- 2 **Take a slow, deep breath and try to push the breath all the way down into your belly.** Hold your breath for a moment; then let it out slowly. Try to make your exhalations longer than your inhalations.
- 3 **Starting with your feet and working your way up to your head, tighten and release each muscle group individually.** Techniques such as these can counteract your body's fight or flight response, which leads to a faster heart rate, higher blood pressure, shallow breathing, tense muscles and a racing mind. Triggering the relaxation response slows everything down and lowers stress hormones in your body, which can help improve your overall health.



The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, **Medical Testing at Home**, is at personalbest.com/extras/20V5tools.

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