

HAPPY DAYS

Need a quick pick-me-up? Try these five easy ways to feel better fast

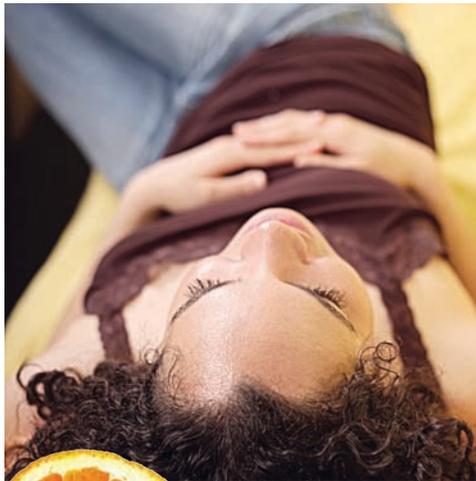
BY HALEY SHAPLEY

With days packed from morning until night with work, meetings, errands, family commitments and more, it's no wonder many women regularly feel sapped of energy. But that doesn't mean you have to sit back and let life pass you by. To boost your energy and mood, try one of these five feel-good favorites:

1. EAT RIGHT. Food is fuel for the body, but many of us don't think of it that way. Consuming a balanced diet—one with plenty of whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, and water—is the best way to maintain energy in the long run, but there are other options if you need a fast fix. “The quickest way to give your body a boost of energy when you are having a sluggish day is by eating foods rich in carbohydrates,” says Jenny Lee, nutritionist and author of *Eat Sexy, Lose Weight*. “Carbohydrates can quickly convert glucose into energy.” Also, avoid processed foods, trans fats, alcohol and sugar, which can all sap energy fast.

2. PHONE A FRIEND. Feeling emotionally close to another person boosts progesterone, a hormone that helps reduce anxiety and stress, according to a study from the University of Michigan. So make time to connect with someone you care about, even if it's only for a few minutes a day.

3. TAKE A POWER NAP. In addition to getting the eight to nine hours of sleep you need each night for optimal health, you can also try taking power naps. According to Mark Rosekind, a sleep expert who once headed



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the NASA Fatigue Countermeasures Program, NASA pilots boosted their performance by 34 percent and their alertness by 54 percent when they took a short, planned nap. Just remember not to snooze for more than 30 minutes—this will likely leave you groggy and could interfere with your ability to fall asleep at night.

4. LET OUT A SWEAR WORD. Researchers at Keele University in England found that people were able to withstand the pain of keeping their hand in ice water for longer when they uttered a swear word instead of a more common, neutral word—and the effect was strongest for women. They think cursing triggers our fight-or-flight response, which

allows the body to better tolerate pain. But lest you think cursing up a storm is the answer for everything, this works best for those who don't use profanity often.

5. DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY. Don't let a day go by without engaging in activities that bring you joy. Shannon Hammer, author of *The Positive Portions Food & Fitness Journal*, says finding joy has helped her maintain a 100-pound-plus weight loss and keep her energy up. “My hobby is belly dancing,” she says. “I'm not particularly good at it, but when I'm done, I feel sexy, happy and feisty.” So find the time to do whatever makes you happy—your health may depend on it.