It's 6 p.m., and after massaging five clients, washing and drying two loads of linens and balancing your checkbook, all you can think about is the couch at home. You're not alone. Many overworked massage therapists don't have enough energy to get through the day with focus and joy—and not enough stamina on reserve to enjoy life after the workday is done. The good news is, many natural remedies can boost your energy and get you back to being a productive, energetic person.

Before you consider these remedies, however, it's important to check to make sure your fatigue is not caused by a major underlying condition like anemia, infection, endocrine or hormone imbalance, or vitamin deficiency. See your physician for a simple blood test to rule out any of these conditions.

Also, a different type of testing can look at the health of the adrenal glands, the glands partially responsible for stress reactions. In a fight-or-flight situation, the adrenal glands secrete cortisol, which helps the body respond to stress. In modern life, the daily, chronic stressors we all experience—lack of sleep, commuting traffic, poor diet, time pressures, deadlines and illness—can keep the adrenal glands working overtime. It's thought that over time, this response to chronic stress causes the body to lose the ability to respond to stress in the appropriate way.

A common symptom of this so-called adrenal burnout is fatigue. Naturopathic physicians and other holistic providers offer ways to test the adrenal glands to get a better idea of how well they are responding. Assuming your fatigue is not caused by an underlying condition mentioned above, a variety of lifestyle techniques exist that you can employ to increase your energy.

Get your Zs
At the top of the list is getting adequate amounts of deep, restful sleep. Aim for eight to 10 hours of uninterrupted sleep each night.

If you have trouble falling asleep, make sure you avoid stimulating activities—searching the Internet,
working on your business plan, watching TV—right before bed.

Instead, engage in relaxing activities to calm your mind and prepare for sleep, such as reading, taking a warm bath, meditating or journaling. It's important, too, to make sure your bedroom is conducive to sleeping. Decorate with dark colors and modest lighting. Make sure you are sleeping on a comfortable bed and that your bedroom has good air flow. A sleeping mask to drown out any light can be helpful as well.

**Move**

It takes energy to exercise, but you are rewarded in the long run with even more energy. Exercising regularly increases your body's endurance and also fosters development of the building blocks the body needs to produce more energy. As an added bonus, exercising during the day helps you get better sleep.

**Eat well**

The dietary choices you make can also influence the amount of energy you have to get through the day. It's important to keep your blood sugar stable throughout the day and avoid hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar. This generally occurs from skipping meals, going too long between meals or choosing the wrong types of foods.

Foods that cause blood sugar to rise and fall quickly are simple carbohydrates like sugary snacks and white breads and flours. These foods are broken down and absorbed easily and quickly by the body, leaving the body hungry for more. Foods that take longer to break down and digest (therefore leaving you fuller and keeping your blood sugar stable) are proteins, fats and complex carbohydrates.

Healthy proteins are found in organic, grass-fed meats, fish, eggs, cheese, yogurt and other dairy products, beans and legumes, nuts and seeds and some whole grains. Healthy fat sources include avocado, coconut, fatty fish (like tuna, sardines and salmon), extra-virgin olive oil and the oils in nuts and seeds. Complex carbohydrates contain fiber, which slows digestion. These foods include fruits, vegetables and whole grains, such as brown rice, whole wheat, spelt and quinoa.

Eating the right foods in the right combination at the right time can have a huge impact on your energy. I generally recommend people eat every three to four hours and always combine carbohydrates (even complex ones) with protein.

I know it's common to have massage clients back to back, and it can be easy to either forget to eat or simply not have the time. I can't stress how important it is to ensure you eat regularly, as it literally gives your body the energy it needs to function throughout the day.

**Supplement as needed**

Many supplements are marketed as energy boosters; however, everyone is unique and responds to supplements in unique ways. What works for your friend or co-worker may not be as effective for you, given your individual biochemistry and genetic makeup.

That said, a few of the most effective supplements include high-quality multivitamins, CoQ10, D-ribose, Siberian ginseng and licorice.

**Multivitamins:** It's important to ensure your body has the basic building blocks it needs to perform the numerous tasks it does every day. A potent multivitamin offers your body the vitamins and minerals it needs to perform optimally.

In general, a one-a-day multivitamin is not enough, especially if you are overworked, over-stressed and losing steam during the day. It's important to take a multivitamin tailored to your specific needs. Many types are available, so consider a formula that was prepared to give your specific demographic (age/male/female, etc.) exactly what it needs.

If you're one of the few people who has trouble taking multivitamins (they may make you feel nauseous), try one of the newer whole-foods based multivitamins now widely available. These tend to be easier for sensitive people to tolerate.

**CoenzymeQ10 (or CoQ10):** The energy powerhouse of every cell in your body is the mitochondria. The mitochondria's primary mission is to create ATP, the energy-producing molecule of your body. It's thought that, due to the increased toxicity of our environment—from pollution, disease and chronic stress—and with increased age, the mitochondria become less efficient and stop producing as much ATP.

In other words, you may feel tired because your body is literally not able to make the amount of energy you need to function and feel your best. This needn't be a chronic condition; there are ways to get the mitochondria working at high speed again. This is where CoenzymeQ10 (or CoQ10) comes in.
Among many other duties, CoQ10 is a key player in the production of ATP. Your body has to have CoQ10 in order to go through the many steps of producing energy. The body has the ability to make this antioxidant itself, and you get a small amount from such foods as meats and seafood. But levels of CoQ10 can decline with age and with increased exposure to pollutants that deplete the body's natural antioxidants.

In the absence of significant heart disease or neurological impairment, a good starting dose is 30 milligrams per day. There is some thought that a reduced form of CoQ10, ubiquinol, may be easier absorbed and utilized by the body. If you don't experience increased levels of energy with 30 milligrams of CoQ10, try the ubiquinol form. It can take up to three months to realize the full effect of this important nutrient, so do not take it only when you're tired—it is likely you will not notice an immediate effect.

**D-ribose:** D-ribose is a sugar that is one of the key components of the ATP molecules. Having low levels of essential supplies for the building of ATP will keep your body from maximizing how much energy it creates.

For normal, healthy, energized people, enough ribose should occur naturally in the body to make energy. Lower levels are found in people who have had heart attacks or who have areas of ischemia (a restriction in blood supply) where no energy is being produced. Shortages are also found in the skeletal muscles of athletes after high-intensity workouts. It is also thought that people with chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia may benefit from increased intake of ribose, which suggests the amount the body can make may be low for them as well.

I have safely recommended this nutrient to many people who are simply low on energy, and the effects are noted right away. The research on ribose shows a good starting dose is 5 grams with breakfast and lunch. It is energy producing, so I do not recommend taking it after lunch as it may interfere with sleep. It is important to take it with meals, as it may cause lower blood sugar levels and, rarely, some digestive side effects. It is not recommended for diabetic patients, unless they are under the close supervision of a physician, because of its effects on blood sugar.

**Siberian ginseng and licorice:** Many herbal remedies exist that can be used to stimulate energy and stamina. Note, however, while herbs are considered safe to use, some can have adverse interactions with certain medications. If you are taking any pharmaceutical medications, it is strongly...
If you are taking medication, consult your health-care practitioner to determine if herbal therapies are an appropriate treatment for you.

Siberian ginseng, or Eleutherococcus, and licorice are two of the most effective herbal therapies for improving energy. Both of these botanical medicines work on the adrenal glands, the small hormone glands that sit on top of the kidneys. They are considered to be adaptogenic herbs, or herbs that enable the body to adapt and react in a healthy way to stress.

I often recommend these herbs together, but will use Siberian ginseng alone if someone has trouble with, or is medicated for, high blood pressure. Siberian ginseng is more tonifying and less stimulating than licorice. Licorice, through its many actions on the endocrine or hormonal system, can decrease levels of potassium in the blood and cause high blood pressure if used in excess. It is not advised to take licorice if you have high blood pressure or are on medications to control high blood pressure.

Reclaim your life

Most people who spend their days feeling worn out, drained and fatigued can break the cycle. If you have consulted with your physician and confirmed you’re not vitamin or mineral deficient, hormonally imbalanced or suffering from another serious cause of fatigue, you can reclaim your energy.

Get the most out of your days through proper sleep, nutrition and exercise, as well as a few natural nutrients.

Melissa McCarty, N.D., is a licensed naturopathic physician practicing in Seattle, Washington. She is a graduate of Bastyr University (www.bastyr.edu) and completed a two-year training in family practice medicine at the Bastyr Center for Natural Health, where she currently acts as adjunct clinical faculty and sees patients in private practice. She has written numerous health articles and gives regular presentations about natural medicine in the greater Seattle area.

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