

6 steps to beat fatigue

One of the most common conditions that we hear from our patients is that of tiredness. Doctors are so used to hearing about it that they have a shorthand way of writing it on your patient notes (TATT - tired all the time). Why are we all so exhausted?

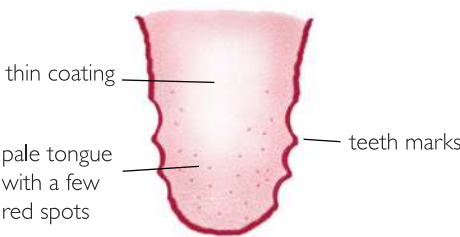
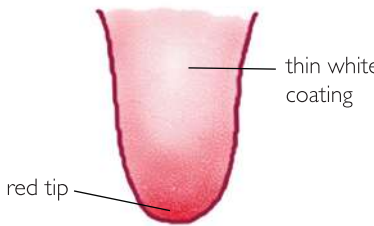
We are all different, and feelings of lethargy or exhaustion can be due to a variety of reasons. It's important that you do not ignore it or use chemical stimulants to get you through. Tiredness is your body telling you that you need to make some lifestyle changes, so make sure that you're listening. If you leave it, your life will be even more affected and it may lead to a more serious condition.

WHAT YOU SHOULDN'T DO

The most counterproductive thing that you can do when you are feeling tired is to artificially boost your energy levels. This fleeting burst of energy will leave you feeling more exhausted, keep your body out of balance and can lead to a reliance on stimulants in order for you to feel like you can function properly. **AVOID COFFEE, ENERGY DRINKS AND SUGARY FOODS.**

HOW CHINESE MEDICINE LOOKS AT FATIGUE

In Chinese Medicine theory there are 2 common syndromes which lead to a lack of energy. It's a good idea to try to work out which category you fall into but **KEEP IN MIND** that you may be suffering from both of them.

	QI DEFICIENCY	QI STAGNATION
Description	Your body is physically depleted of enough Qi to give you energy.	Your body has enough Qi but it does not circulate well enough to give you energy.
Cause	Usually because of an unhealthy lifestyle, general illness or recovery from an infection.	Usually because of stress and emotional difficulties.
Usual Symptoms	Fatigued, poor appetite sometimes spontaneous sweating. Weak pulse, puffy tongue with teeth marks on the side. 	Exhausted, stressed, easily irritated, depressed. Strong pulse, tongue with a thin coating and sometimes a red tip. 
This guide offers solutions for both conditions but look out for these symbols for specific instructions for each syndrome. 		

STEP 1: **EAT & DRINK FOR ENERGY**

The aim of a good diet is to take in nutrition whilst keeping your blood sugar levels steady. Sudden high jumps in your blood sugar will leave you feeling exhausted afterwards and puts stress on your body, so you must try to avoid very sugary foods.

INTERMITTENT FASTING - When you eat is as important as what you eat and the digestion of food takes a fair amount of energy. When you go for more than 12 hours without food your body goes into maintenance mode and repairs itself. It begins using fats for energy which provide a much cleaner and more stable energy source than sugars. For many people this leads to an increase in energy levels without the fatigue slumps.

LESS CARBS MORE FATS - You may have seen the classic food pyramid given out by the government which shows that the majority of your diet should be carbohydrates. Did you know that this pyramid was created during World War II to advise people during food rationing? This model is simply incorrect and bad for you. For example, a baked potato raises your blood sugar faster than sugar! Eat less carbs and more high quality fats, vegetables and protein.

EAT IRON - You need iron to make red blood cells which carry oxygen around your body to keep you energized. Beans, pulses, red meat and dark green vegetables are great.

ENERGY - EAT MORE	LETHARGY - EAT LESS
● Low glycemic and high iron foods like pulses, nuts and wholegrains ● Green and cruciferous vegetables ● Quality protein especially fish and grass fed meat ● Good oils like olive oil and linseed oil	● Bread - especially white bread ● Potatoes, pasta and white rice ● Sweets, cakes and other sugary foods ● Hydrogenated fats and fried foods

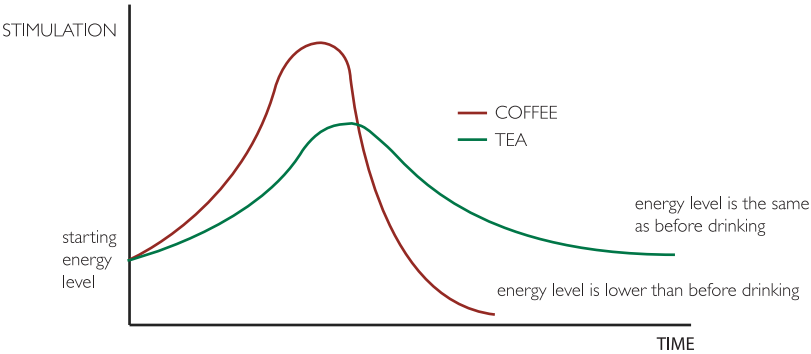
STAY HYDRATED - Dehydration is a major cause of fatigue and yet so many of us don't drink enough. Avoid any sugary drinks like fruit juice and soft drinks and also steer clear of coffee and energy drinks (which will exhaust you after a brief sugar/caffeine rush). Instead drink at least 8 - 10 glasses of water or tea (preferably white or green tea).

WHY IS TEA BETTER THAN COFFEE?

A cup of tea has about one third of the amount of caffeine in a cup of coffee, but the caffeine in tea also has a different effect on the body. The caffeine in coffee is in a 'free state' and is therefore released very quickly into the blood stream. This means that it has more effect on the heart rate and blood pressure and gives a short lived rush of nervous energy followed by a period of exhaustion. In tea, the caffeine is chained with the polyphenols and so is absorbed much more slowly by the muscles making it ideal for combatting fatigue without the feelings of 'jumpiness' or nervousness. The caffeine in tea does not cause exhaustion afterwards.

WHY IS TEA BETTER THAN WATER?

- Tea is more hydrating than water
- Tea contains antioxidants, vitamins and minerals to improve your health and appearance
- Tea contains theanine to keep you calm yet alert (which is good for those suffering from Qi stagnation)
- Tea has been shown to stabilize blood sugar and helps to prevent peaks which lead to exhaustion.



STEP 2: **GET ACTIVE**

Exercise helps to invigorate the flow of Qi which boosts your energy and increases the secretion of mood enhancing chemicals in the body to beat stress. Exercise also ensures that you get a good sleep so that you wake up refreshed. Try to get at least 30 minutes of exercise most days. If you are suffering from Qi STAGNATION then vigorous exercise is good to open the flow of Qi. If you are suffering from Qi DEFICIENCY then be careful not to overdo exercise. A brisk walk is much better for you than a full gym work out until your Qi level rises to full capacity.

STEP 3: **GRAB ENOUGH ZZZZZZZZ'S**

It goes without saying that if you don't get enough sleep then you'll feel tired but did you know that there is a right way and a wrong way to sleep?

GET ENOUGH - Everyone needs a different amount of sleep depending on their lifestyle but you should be aiming for around 7.5 - 8.5 hours per night

BUT NOT TOO MUCH - Oversleeping is as bad for you as sleep deprivation. If you find that you are regularly sleeping more than 9 hours then you have to address the reasons why. Perhaps your sleeping environment is not good or you are feeling depressed and hopeless. Extra sleep is not the answer and can contribute to other conditions.

KEEP IT REGULAR - Cut out the daytime naps, this only confuses and disrupts your body clock further.

IT'S BEDTIME - Since the invention of electricity we are going to bed later and later but our bodies are not designed for these hours. For example, our stress glands (adrenal) recharge and recover between 11pm and 1am so you should be asleep during this time to get the best stress relief. Turn off the TV, stop working and lower the lights at around 10pm. Try to be asleep by 11pm.

SORT OUT YOUR BED SPACE - Light disrupts sleep so keep your bedroom dark (so dark that you can't see your hand in front of your face). Also, your body will naturally feel sleepy when the temperature cools so keep your place below 21 degrees. Avoid alarm clocks which cause stress, or if you have to, make sure that it is not too loud and quite far away from you (stops the 'snooze' button addiction which disrupts your important last hour of REM sleep). Make sure that you do not use your bed for anything else other than sleep or sex, any other activities will confuse the body as to where it should rest and make it harder to relax in bed.



STEP 4: **BEAT STRESS & EMOTIONS**

Your energy levels are directly connected with your stress and emotions so deal with them rather than hiding under the bed sheets. Here are some quick tips:

LAUGH & CHAT - Communication with friends or therapists is essential to feeling better. Surround yourself with people who can listen and can make you laugh. Smiling, laughter and communication invigorates and feeds your Qi which boosts your energy level.

MEDITATE - Sometimes we are so caught up with life that we forget to take the time to be in the here and now. Spend half an hour sitting in a quiet place, focus on your breathing, posture and any areas of tension. Relax and simply become an observer. Look around you or close your eyes but make no judgements or thoughts, just observe. If you find yourself thinking then mentally step away and observe the thoughts until they disappear.

BREATHE - Deep breathing feeds your body oxygen whilst helping you to relax. Concentrate on breathing into your stomach. Your tummy should expand before your chest rises. Inhale for 5 seconds, hold for 5 seconds and exhale for 5 seconds. Do this for just a minute every couple of hours.

GET OUTSIDE - Fresh air feeds and invigorates Qi in your body to help you de-stress and energise.

MASSAGE - Don't think of massage as a luxury but as a powerful tool to ease stress and invigorate your body. Come and book an appointment and walk out feeling like a new person.



STEP 5: LOOK AROUND YOU

Your energy is directly affected by your environment. The Chinese use the theory of Feng Shui to create a surrounding that feeds and circulates Qi to your body. Why not find out more by reading some books but in the meantime, here are some quick tips:

PLANTS - Studies have shown that having some plants around you increases energy levels and reduces blood pressure.

LIGHT - Just as you need darkness for a good night's sleep, you need as much natural light as possible to keep your energy up. Invest in a sunlamp or position yourself closer to a window.

MOTIVATIONAL OBJECTS - Surround yourself with things that give you energy like pictures of family and loved ones or colourful paintings. Feed the eyes. Conversely, clutter and mess is energy sapping so take some time to de-clutter.

MUSIC - An instant way to change your mood is through music. Whether you want to relax and de-stress or need an energy kick, use music as a medicine.

SMELLS - Most people neglect the importance of smell in their lives but aromas greatly affect your mood. Spending a few pounds on some **PEPPERMINT ESSENTIAL OIL** for example gives you an instant energy sniffer that you can carry around with you and use whenever you feel yourself lagging.

ERGONOMICS - Are you comfortable in your work and home? Spending time in uncomfortable positions blocks the flow of Qi which leads to pain and drains your energy. So work on your posture and fix your environment so that you are always feeling comfortable. Go on, throw out that uncomfortable chair, get a new computer mouse and plump up those cushions.

STEP 6: SEE AN EXPERT

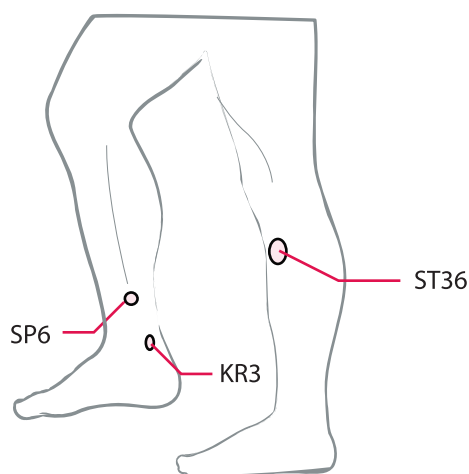
Sometimes your body needs extra help to recharge, especially if the fatigue is long term and chronic. In some cases, fatigue may be caused by another underlying condition. It's always a good idea to seek the help of a doctor to find out more detail about your particular reasons for tiredness and to receive individualised treatment. Go and see your GP if you feel it's necessary and make sure that you come and speak to an AcuMedic doctor. Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal medicine are incredibly effective at naturally boosting your energy levels and treatment is individualised according to your specific condition. Our fully qualified doctors will uncover the roots of your fatigue and work with you to get you back to your full potential. **COME IN AND ASK FOR SOME FREE HEALTH ADVICE. CALL 08700 100 023 TO BOOK AN APPOINTMENT.**

TWO QUICK ENERGY BOOSTING TRICKS

1. For a quick energy burst, place both wrists under running cold water for 20 seconds and then dab them behind your ears.
2. Give yourself acupressure by pushing specific acupoints. They should feel a little tender or ticklish but apply hard pressure for 10-15 seconds and then repeat on the other side of your body. Try doing this a few times a day.



If you have **QI DEFICIENCY** then massage the following points.



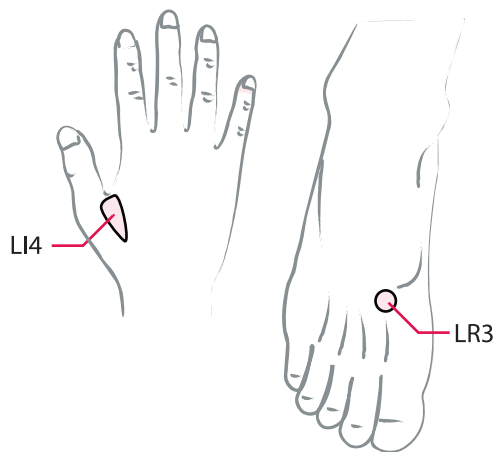
ST36 - One hand width down from the centre of the kneecap and midway between the front of the leg and the outer side of the leg.

SP6 - About a hand widths up from inside ankle in between calf muscle and Tibia bone.

KI3 - Inner ankle in between the ball joint and the Achilles tendon.



If you have **QI STAGNATION** then massage the following points.



LI4 - The soft tissue area between thumb and index finger.

LR3 - In between first and second Metatarsel bones where they meet in the middle of the foot.