

How to stay productive in the afternoon without caffeine.

Everyone knows the feeling; the dreaded mid-afternoon slump, after lunch trying to keep your eyes open. What if we told you that it is human nature to be like this, it's all to do with your Circadian rhythm?

Instead of swigging gallons of coffee to try and stay alert, try some of these small changes to be able to stay on task for longer into the afternoon.

Making sure you're getting enough sleep can obviously reduce the chances of an afternoon energy crash. It is recommended that adults should get at least seven hours of uninterrupted sleep each night, with nine hours being optimum for most people. And keeping a consistent routine will make sure you are able to use your energy reserves as efficiently as possible and stay alert for longer.

Speaking of sleep, napping can either make or break energy levels, with a mistimed nap destroying the rest of your day. In the best-case scenario, we would suggest resisting the urge to nap at all. Obviously, when in the office, taking a nap might not be possible, but when working from home the temptation to dive into bed is always there. If you absolutely must nap, then Daniel Pink's "nappuccino" technique might be the answer you are looking for. The idea is that you have a cup of coffee before heading for a 20-minute nap. Then, at the end of those 20 minutes, the caffeine will have kicked in, so the technique has you revived with both sleep and caffeine at the same time.

Being aware of the slump and working your day around it can help keep productivity up while fighting heavy eyes. Schedule emails, filing or even meetings to around your slump. If you are an extrovert that gains energy through social interaction, then having meeting will be the perfect way to re-engage your brain and kickstart your second wind of energy.

It is easy in the afternoon to graze on sweets to power through an energy low, but this can compound the problem. Getting a short-term spike in energy to just crash a little while later will provide diminishing returns on productivity. Try to keep most of your eating to set mealtimes and keep yourself sufficiently hydrated. If you struggle to stay away from the short-term snack, try including more protein in your lunch along with more carbohydrates. The complex sugars in carbs will provide more slow-release energy later in the day, and the extra protein will help keep you more alert.

If and when you feel mentally worn out, take some time to have a change of scenery. Go for a solo walk to reset your brain and get the energising boost of a mid afternoon workout. Or invite a friend along to get some extra socialisation while going to grab a coffee. Different surroundings help your mind take a break from the computer screens, and incorporating the great outdoors can provide even more benefits.