STAYWELL

www.intermountainpower.com

February 2017 Brian Coles, Health Analyst Volume 285

DOES WHAT I EAT CAUSE FATIGUE?

Food can have varying effects on the body. What a person eats can produce energy, induce sleep, stimulate the immune system, help heal, ward off disease, and cause fatigue. What a person doesn't eat can also cause fatigue.

Proteins – Certain foods can cause a person to feel fatigued. Research has shown that short-term, high-protein, low-carb diets can help a person lose weight and not feel as hungry. However, the primary purpose of carbs is to provide energy to the body. One side effect of consuming a high-protein diet is loss of energy. The body is not designed to use protein as an energy source, except in cases of extreme malnutrition. For those people who like to be active, (hiking, running, etc.), following a high-protein, low-carb diet can actually cause fatigue.

The timing of consuming high-protein foods can cause another side effect. Eating a lot of proteins in the evening can limit sleep. The digestive system has to work harder and longer to break down proteins. This increased metabolic rate can impact the ability to fall asleep or to get restful sleep. If you are following a high-protein diet, limit protein before bedtime.

Carbs – Consuming foods high in carbohydrates, specifically simple carbohydrates (refined grains, sugar, juices, etc.), can also lead to fatigue. Often when consuming simple sugars, a sleepy, groggy effect happens later. This is because the body delivers a rapid release of insulin to stabilize the sugar in the blood stream. This increase of insulin quickly helps the sugar enter the cells or be stored in the liver or as fat. With the increased insulin, a rapid decrease in blood sugar follows, causing a person to have less energy (low blood sugar) and becoming sluggish. Afternoon crash!

High-Fat Foods – Research also demonstrates that high-fat foods affect restful sleep. Consuming too much fat during the day has been shown to impair REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. The more fat consumed, the more sleep was disturbed by waking, tossing, turning, and abnormal breathing. This lack of restful sleep results in increased fatigue.

Overeating – Overeating can cause fatigue. As with proteins, eating large meals before bedtime can also cause an increase in blood flow to the digestive system. This limits the amount of blood and nutrients available for the brain, which leads to a groggy, sleepy feeling.

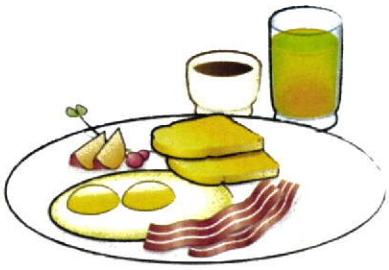
Neurotransmitters – Serotonin is a chemical produced in the brain that promotes calm and pleasant moods. Carbohydrates help the body produce serotonin. This also leads to increased tryptophan, a chemical which induces sleepiness. High-carbohydrate meals cause the body to produce more serotonin and tryptophan which leads to drowsiness and fatigue.

High-protein, high-carbohydrate, and high-fat eating can lead to less sleep which results in greater fatigue. It would seem that the key to combating nutrition-induced fatigue is nutrient balance. Eating a balanced diet is healthier. Goldilocks got it right: not too much, not too little, but something in the middle is just right.

NUTRITION TO FIGHT FATIGUE

What can help fight fatigue? Sometime in the last 100 plus years, we have flipped from a more energetic and restful routine to a fast paced and fatiguing routine. So what has flipped?

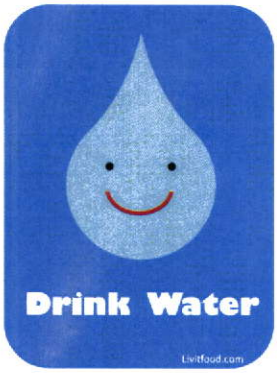
"When I was younger, I used to love to go to my grandparents to spend the night. They were farmers and lived off of what they grew and raised. The next morning was always the best. We had a big breakfast: juice, hot Postum, milk, eggs, toast, fruit, bacon or sausage, and sometimes pancakes. We ate huge meals. They needed energy to last them throughout the day. The evening meal was much smaller. I remember my grandpa coming in after milking at night and eating only a bowl of bread and milk.



"A few years ago, I had a limited entry hunt. We hiked for several hours to reach our hunting spot. The first few times, I would get about half way up the hill and run out of energy. My usual breakfast was some instant oatmeal and a granola bar. Then one day I decided to do something different. I ate the same oatmeal and granola, but I added two boiled eggs and toast. Three things happened: I no longer ran out of energy half way up the hill, I wasn't hungry most of the day, and I did not come home and need a mid-day nap. I had more energy all day long and less hunger."

Breakfast – According to research, breakfast has many benefits. It leads to better energy. It provides nutrients to the brain early, and can lead to more alertness and better brain function. A person tends to eat less all day long (if he/she eats a well-balanced large breakfast), which can lead to weight loss, not weight gain. Your body functions better when you eat a larger, more balanced breakfast. Breakfast is the most essential and important meal of the day—not dinner.

Fluids – Cells, muscles, joints, cartilage, blood, fascia, etc., all need fluids to function properly. When dehydrated, a person's muscles and joints feel heavy or tired, resulting in greater friction from less lubrication. A dehydrated person has to work harder to move the joints. In a hydrated body, cells function better and more efficiently, allowing less muscle effort, digestion is better, and organs are more efficient. The brain also works better; therefore, less brain fog and fatigue. So, drink up, eat early, and you will feel better all day long.



Sources:
http://www.livestrong.com/article/530662-does-eating-carbs-make-you-sleepy/
https://health.clevelandclinic.org/2014/06/5-foods-that-help-you-sleep/
http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/ss/slideshow-sleep-foods
http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/news/20080610/high-fat-diet-linked-to-poor-sleep
http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/foods-fight-fatigue#1