

The Surprising Reasons You Shouldn't Get Your Energy From Caffeine (And 8 Ways To Get True Energy)

Millions of people struggle with fatigue – grogginess, brain fog, lack of quality sleep or sleep quantity, or even low physical energy for basic tasks of daily living, like going up and down stairs or cleaning the garage. **Sound familiar?**

What's worse, caffeine – the most popular drug on the planet that people rely upon to combat fatigue – has daunting side effects, *including extreme addiction*.

While a nice cup of coffee here and there is likely harmless, large doses, especially in combination with the sugar and other additives you'll find in everything from carbonated energy drinks to fancy coffee beverages at your local coffee shop, can result in **caffeine toxicity or overdose side effects**.

What you're about to learn in this article will surprise you: **caffeine and coffee don't provide actual energy, but simply FAKE ENERGY**.

In a nutshell, they temporarily squeeze huge amounts of adrenaline from your adrenal glands, resulting in a longer-term drop in your energy levels and even greater dependence on these compounds to get you through the day.

How Caffeine Works To Give You “Fake Energy”

So how exactly does caffeine give you this “fake energy”?

Caffeine's primary mechanism of action is achieved via boosting the levels of the neurotransmitters serotonin, dopamine and acetylcholine.

Dopamine affects levels of concentration by blocking adenosine receptors in your forebrain, receptors that would normally signal your brain to be tired when it's supposed to be tired, like at bedtime.

Caffeine also increases the release of adrenaline, which stimulates the sympathetic nervous system to make your heart beat faster, send more blood to your muscles, and tell your liver to release sugar into the bloodstream for energy.

And caffeine can do more than that. For example, it can help muscles contract by causing the sarcoplasmic reticulum in muscle fibers to release calcium ions. It has been shown to reduce the percentage of maximum exertion that any given level of exercise requires. It also increases circulating and intracellular glucose and fatty acid availability.

Research also shows that **the amount of caffeine we consume matters**. Consumption of 3 milligrams of caffeine per kilogram of body weight (about one to one and a half cups of brewed coffee) appears to not produce some of the energizing effects, and as much as 6 mg/kg may be needed. That's a lot of coffee, especially for women, considering that **high**

caffeine consumption is linked to greater bone loss. On the other hand, depending on your family history, with caffeine consumption linked to a reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease, Type 2 diabetes, and Parkinson's, it may feel like a bargain that works in your favor.

However, caffeine is a highly addictive substance, and many of us crave the “fake energy” it provides and consume it in large amounts.

The problem with caffeine is that the energy it gives you is short-lived. You've no doubt experienced the **up-and-down energy swings** associated with a big cup of coffee or energy drink. Every caffeine high is followed by a bounceback low, and typically, the low prompts you to ingest even more caffeine.

Why Constant Coffee Decreases Your Ability To Produce Energy

So what exactly happens to your energy levels each time you drink a cup of coffee? First, your brain sends a message to the pituitary gland, and the pituitary then releases a hormone that tells your adrenals to produce the **stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol** – which basically triggers the *exact same stress response your body would use if you were in imminent physical danger*.

With just the occasional cup of coffee, your adrenals can handle this type of stimulation. But if you are drinking many cups of coffee each day, and find yourself relying upon coffee for any meaningful source of energy, you will find you need more and more to “get a reaction.” **This isn't just a tolerance to caffeine, and can instead mean your adrenals are weak and less able to respond to coffee.** The adrenals can become, in a word, drained.

This “adrenal fatigue” action of caffeine has been demonstrated in research. In one study titled “[Caffeine Stimulation of Cortisol Secretion Across the Waking Hours in Relation to Caffeine Intake Levels](#),” researchers gave three groups of subjects a 0 mg, 300 mg or 600 mg dose of caffeine each day for five days.

Then, on the sixth day, they gave each subject a morning and afternoon dose of caffeine and measured the cortisol response. The subjects who had been abstaining from caffeine saw big spikes in cortisol on the sixth day. But those who had been ingesting caffeine each day saw no cortisol response at all in the morning of the sixth day, and a reduced response in the afternoon.

If you find yourself having trouble with energy levels, then **giving up a morning cup of tea or coffee, an energy drink, or a caffeinated soda might sound daunting, but it can be a crucial part of beginning to once again create natural energy**, especially when combined with the other tips you'll find in this article.

Fortunately, [the short-term withdrawal symptoms from caffeine are generally gone within just a few days to a couple weeks](#).

How To Get Energy Without Caffeine

If you don't want the potential for adrenal fatigue, withdrawal, addiction, and the damaging "fake energy" that coffee and caffeine provide, what's the alternative?

It all comes down to understanding how your body makes true energy: energy derived from sources other than simply a surge in cortisol or adrenaline; energy derived from something other than a big dump of blood glucose from your liver in response to stress.

Your body's true energy currency is "Adenosine Triphosphate," also known as ATP. I have a great discussion about how cells can communicate using ATP in a podcast interview with **Dr. Todd Schlapfer** at "[How To Get Your Cells To Communicate With Lightning Speed.](#)"

Fatigue, both mental and physical, can be traced to insufficient levels of the tiny battery-like ATP molecules, which are derived and created in the cells from food you eat. **By maintaining adequate ATP levels, you keep your true energy levels elevated and your batteries charged.**

8 Ways To Increase ATP

There are a variety of strategies for increasing ATP. Many supplements, herbs, and wild plant extracts are traditionally used for this. For example, **the adaptogenic herbs cordyceps and ginseng both naturally increase ATP levels and energy.**

Cordyceps sinensis is a medicinal fungi from China that has historically been used in traditional Chinese medicine for its metabolic and energy-producing effects. The Cordyceps fungi live on insects, and when an insect dies, it replaces the dead insect's tissues with fungal structures.

Studies show that **cordyceps can increase energy in muscle and other tissues by increasing levels of ATP.** Cordyceps has also been demonstrated to increase both immune cell production and heart muscle mitochondrial ATP production, and seems to be especially effective at increasing ATP under conditions of stress.

Ginseng also has a history of traditional use in China, where it is considered to have "**qi-increasing**" properties. The concept of "qi" is considered to be "energy flow" or "vital energy," and in Chinese medicine, a deficiency of qi is associated with heart disease and lethargy.

Studies show that ginseng increases ATP production in the mitochondria due to antioxidant effects. It has also been shown that ginseng activates multiple enzymes in the tricarboxylic acid cycle (Krebs cycle), enabling mitochondria to extract maximum amounts of ATP from glucose in the presence of oxygen.

Ginseng is a perfect example of how increasing ATP production and fighting fatigue involves protecting and supporting the cells' mitochondria.

In addition to including cordyceps and ginseng in your diet, **here are six other strategies to accomplish mitochondrial protection and ATP production:**

1. **Minimize exposure to environmental toxins** such as heavy metals, cigarette smoke, alcohol, and processed and fatty foods.
2. **Drink plenty of high quality water**, as cells require significant amounts of water to produce ATP. Get **regular exercise** to stimulate movement in your body's tissues.
3. Get enough **B vitamins**, since vitamin B2 supports energy metabolism; B3 and B6 aid in ATP production; B5 helps form mitochondrial enzymes; and B12 is essential for the delivery of oxygen to cells.
4. Include quality sources of **vitamin C**. This antioxidant protects cells from damage, which can increase ATP production.
5. Supplement with **milk thistle extract**, an antioxidant shown to strengthen the outer wall of liver cells. These cells are necessary for making and storing ATP.
6. Prioritize getting **high quality sleep**. This is when a large amount of cellular repair and ATP production occurs.

Summary

If you are one of the millions of Americans who struggle with fatigue and whose batteries seem chronically run down, I'd highly recommend you choose a safe and non-addictive energy boost, rather than relying on coffee or caffeinated energy drinks.

Sure, fatigue can sometimes be linked to an underlying illness, but often the solution is not medical treatment or adding medications, but rather **taking care of the natural mechanisms in your body that manufacture ATP, a true source of energy.**