

10 Tips to Prevent the Afternoon Slump

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If you're like two-thirds of the population, you've experienced the afternoon slump. You know the feeling...it's mid-afternoon and you feel tired and drained and want to call it a day. While you still plug away at your work, you often find that you are not as productive as you need to be. You've hit the afternoon slump.

This drop in energy is not all in your head. It is a physiological response from your body. Fortunately, you can employ methods to reduce the slump's frequency and to shorten its duration once it does start. Some of the methods work solely on the individual level, while others require a company-wide initiative. When you utilize these 10 tips and instill them in your office, you will replace the afternoon slump with a time of increased productivity.

Tip #1: Drink your water. Even if you are simply working behind a desk all day, your body still uses water. So don't wait until you get that thirsty feeling in your mouth. By that point you are already dehydrated, which can impair your physical and mental functioning. If dehydration is one of the factors attributing to your afternoon slump, you now are experiencing both a brain slump and a body slump.

To prevent this, drink a minimum of eight glasses of water a day, more if you are physically active. Keep a water pitcher and a glass on your desk so you can easily sip water all day. Don't fool yourself into thinking any type of liquid counts toward your water intake. Liquids like coffee or cola dehydrate you and worsen the slump.

Tip #2: Avoid sugar and simple carbohydrates. While a candy bar mid-afternoon may give you a quick sugar rush, in the long run, it actually worsens the slump. Sugar and simple carbohydrates get absorbed immediately into the bloodstream. In response, your blood sugar rises, and your body secretes insulin to bring your sugar level back down. Unfortunately, your body doesn't know when you've stopped eating the candy, so it drops you down into a low blood sugar level by taking too much sugar out of your body. This is why people who rely on sugar for energy have highs and lows throughout the day.

But candy isn't the only culprit. Simple carbohydrates, such as a white bread sandwich and some dessert at lunchtime can cause your blood sugar to drop after an hour or two, causing the afternoon slump. To avoid this, incorporate more proteins and complex carbohydrates into your diet, such as products made with whole-wheat flour, brown rice, etc. They won't trigger blood sugar highs and lows, putting you more on an even keel.

Tip #3: Eat small meals. Have six small meals over the course of the day instead of three large ones. When you eat a big meal in one sitting, it overwhelms your body, causing it to work harder to digest the food. As a result, the digestive process diverts blood away from your brain and your extremities and uses it in the digestive track. With smaller meals, your body doesn't have to work as hard.

Tip #4: Evaluate your lighting. Most offices are lit with cool white fluorescent tubes, which have a terrible effect on how people feel and function at work. A better option is full spectrum fluorescent tubes, as these simulate the wavelength of sunlight. Studies have shown that full spectrum lighting provides many benefits: headaches disappear and afternoon fatigue declines, while productivity levels actually rise.

If your office doesn't already use full spectrum fluorescent tubes, you might want to replace the tube just in your office. Your company may want to replace the tubes company-wide because it is an investment in your company's human capital. As everyone's productivity increases, the company will quickly recoup its investment. The gains will certainly outweigh the expense. After one company re-lamped their offices, they started referring to their lights as their "happy lights" because employees feel so good being under them.

Tip #5: Take walking breaks. Walking gets your blood circulating, helps you breathe better, and stimulates your brain due to the increased blood flow. Take a five or ten minute walk during the day. Walking outside will give you the extra benefit of fresh air, but walking around the office is okay too. If you don't have time to take a walk, run up and down the stairs for two minutes. That will give you the same benefits in half the time.

Tip #6: Meditate. Meditation is great for rejuvenating your body. Each time you meditate, you'll feel like you just took a six-hour nap. By meditating for fifteen to twenty minutes twice a day, you're keeping your body continually energized. If you do run into the afternoon slump, meditating for a quick five minutes can immediately re-energize you.

Physiologically, when you meditate, you go into a state that's similar to deep sleep. Your heart rate, breath rate, and vital signs are lower than the normal state of sleep, so in effect, you give your cells and your body a tremendous amount of rest in a very short period of time. You may even find that you require less sleep at night since you are giving your body much well needed rest twice a day.

Tip #7: Take your vitamins. Several vitamins have an energizing affect on your body, such as B-complex and Ginseng, so take them every day. You get the maximum benefit from your vitamins when you divide your dose throughout the day and take them with a meal. For example instead of taking 100 milligrams once a day, take fifty milligrams with breakfast and fifty with lunch. By doing so, you get much better absorption and greater benefit.

Tip #8: Listen to some music. Music can energize you, but choose carefully. Some music can actually weaken your system and fatigue you. For example, hard rock can make you feel jittery. Find some music you enjoy. Upbeat music can get your body into a more upward stance. If you are listening to music with lyrics, make sure they are positive and motivating.

Tip # 9: Take time to breathe and stretch. Deep breathing is another way to give yourself an energy boost. Your cells require an exchange of air in the lungs to get the waste products out of the body. If you're not breathing enough, you're getting a build-up of waste products. By doing some breathing exercises during the day, you'll get a lot more fresh air into your system, your cells, and your brain.

Try this exercise: Breathe in slowly, filling your stomach first, then the chest, and finally the shoulders while counting to seven. Then exhale slowly, starting to exhale at the shoulders first and finish with the stomach, again while counting to seven. Do this three to six times. When you do, you are dramatically increasing the exchange of fresh air in your body.

Equally important is to stand up and stretch. When you stretch and move, you not only increase the blood flow in your body, but you are also stimulating the lymphatic system, which removes waste products from your body and only functions from muscular contractions. So if you are sitting for hours at a time, you are actually building up waste products in your body. Do some stretches mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

Tip #10: Handle negativity. Negative people and images can have a draining effect on your energy. Conversely, if you spend the day surrounded by positive people and images, you can feel energized by them. If negative people surround you at work, use your mind to go into the positive realm when they're going into the negative. Make a conscious effort to stay positive even when others are negative around you.

Beat the Slump and Enjoy Your Night

No one enjoys feeling tired and drained. So incorporate these ten tips into your day and encourage others in your office to do the same. When you do, you can turn the mid-afternoon hours into a time of increased productivity. And when you feel better at the end of the day, you will have the energy to enjoy your evening.

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