

# Foods to make you feel more energised



*BANT Registered Nutritionist Anjanette Fraser explains which foods will leave you feeling energised and reduce mental blocks*



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If you've been feeling sluggish lately and can't seem to focus on the tasks at hand, your diet may be the culprit. Food affects how your body and brain perform, providing you with the nutrients and energy you need. In this article, I'll explain what to eat to increase your energy and keep your brain focused.

## Which nutrients will give you energy?

### Carbohydrates, proteins and fats

Carbohydrates provide the body with energy by raising your blood sugar level. The Glycaemic Index ranks foods on an 0-100 scale based on how fast they act; higher scores mean quicker releases, while lower ones will take longer before making us energised. Simple carbohydrates have a faster release than complex carbs, but it's important to look at more than this when deciding what kind of food to eat.

Eat the right foods to fuel your workout and achieve goals. Before any exercise, have one or more of these: bananas; grapes; mangoes. Don't forget about white bread and rice either – they'll give you enough energy without making mealtimes difficult. Proteins and fats take longer to break down than carbs. This means that they provide you with more sustainable energy when needed – particularly useful for those times where concentration is required over an extended period of time.

### Iron

Iron is an essential mineral that helps carry oxygen throughout your body, making it one of the most important nutrients for energy. Common symptoms associated with a lack of iron are tiredness and difficulty concentrating.

Iron-rich foods are important for reducing tiredness. These include red meat, kidney beans and edamame among other things. Enjoy them with Vitamin C rich fruit to help your body better absorb this vital nutrient.

Top tip: Make sure not to eat these alongside grains. These contain phytate, which binds to iron making it harder for your body to absorb.

### B12

Vitamin B12 is a necessity for the formation and transportation of red blood cells around your body. Without it, you will experience tiredness as well as low energy levels. You can find this vitamin in meat products like steak or fish; dairy goods such as cheese. But it's less commonly found in vegetarian foods. If you're veggie or vegan it might be worth checking out B12 supplements to top up your energy levels.

### Caffeine

You probably already know that coffee can give you a boost, but did you know why? Caffeine, also found in chocolate, and green tea is an excellent way to get your energy levels going in a hurry. It works by blocking adenosine receptors, reducing drowsiness and increasing adrenaline so you can be alert for longer periods of time.

Be careful with consuming too much though. Caffeine can stay in your body for five to seven hours, so if you're trying to improve sleep and avoid the jitters and anxiety that can come with too much caffeine intake, it's best not to have any caffeine after 3 pm.

Caffeine is a great way to get your energy levels up and running. However, make sure to also prioritise sleep and diet as these have a much bigger role to play in how energised you feel throughout the day than caffeine alone.

## Foods to help clear mental blocks

### Oily fish, walnuts, and flaxseed

Omega 3 is an essential nutrient for cell creation and communication, including brain cells responsible for memory and learning. Oily fish like salmon or mackerel are all rich sources of omega-3 fatty acids; so too are algal oil, walnuts and flaxseed.

### Blueberries

The antioxidants in blueberries help protect your brain from damage caused by free radicals, harmful toxins that can damage cells, cause diseases, and accelerate ageing. A review of 11 studies found they slowed down the ageing process and improved how cells communicate, making them a great fruit for keeping cognitive function sharp. Try eating them on cereal or yoghurt or try them tossed into smoothies.

### Dark chocolate

You'll be happy to learn there are many benefits to eating dark chocolate, including brain-boosting antioxidants and amino acids that trigger the body to produce mood enhancing chemicals. The higher the cocoa content the greater the nutritional benefit. Choose the darkest variety over milk or white chocolate.

### Eggs

Eggs are packed with nutrients. For example, egg yolk contains choline, one of the best sources for brain health and memory improvement. Poach, scramble or boil two eggs for a nutritious breakfast. Omelettes are also a quick easy light meal, which you can easily add vegetables to for topping up your five-a-day.

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