



# running on empty?

9 ways to solve your energy crisis

by Denise Schipani

**I**t's 3 P.M.—do you know where your energy's gone? You probably expect to feel that late-afternoon drag, but you don't always have to. Turns out, some of your regular habits may be sneakily zapping your zip. Fix some or all of these energy stealers, and you just may be feeling brighter this afternoon.

**ENERGY ZAPPER BEING ADDICTED TO E-MAIL** Isn't being wired to the hilt—e-mail, voice mail, IM, BlackBerry—supposed to boost productivity, freeing up your energy? More often, the opposite is true. If you continually halt what you're doing to answer e-mail, check voice mail, and attend to a thousand other beeps and blips, your attention becomes diluted, which leaves you feeling depleted.

There are two things going on here, says John Salerno, MD, a New York City family physician and director of the Salerno Center for Complementary Medicine. "The brain needs a lot of physical and mental energy to multitask,

which gets drained," he says. And continually redirecting your attention from the BlackBerry to other stimuli siphons more energy and distracts your brain further.

**ENERGY FIX** Switch off electronic gadgets during your most productive work hours, which for most people tend to be in the morning, says Laura Stack, author of *The Exhaustion Cure*. As for e-mail, try to limit yourself to checking it once every hour, instead of hopping to whenever it beeps. (Hint: Turn off the beep sound.) If something pops into your mind that you need to remember—call back your mom, e-mail the soccer coach about the snack schedule—write it down and take care of it later. *(Please turn to 80)*

## health

**ENERGY ZAPPER VISUAL CLUTTER** We may be used to living in enclosed spaces with lots of stuff—a refrigerator door packed with artwork, a countertop laden with mail, a desk that's little more than a shifting pile of folders and paper—but it's not how we're meant to live, says Dr. Salerno. "Clutter signals disorder, which makes us anxious. Our brains sense that anxiety."

**ENERGY FIX** Do your best to clear visual clutter, so when you look around, your eyes can "rest" rather than dart from mess to mess, says Janice Ash, organization expert and owner of I Declutter! (*i-declutter.com*). Instead of layering papers on a bulletin board, leave a small border of space around them. Clear the front of the fridge of all but the most current kids' artwork, and make a habit of leaving the kitchen counter stuff-free before bed each night.

**ENERGY ZAPPER BEING BORED** Ever sat around for an hour or more not tackling a chore or work because it's just so darned monotonous? Mental foot-dragging, boredom and lack of motivation are draining, says Dr. Salerno. "Put simply, we like to see results, and getting things done gives us a mental energy boost." So avoiding tasks deprives you of that high.

**ENERGY FIX** Find a partner for encouragement—a friend, a coworker—and call or e-mail to enlist her in a time challenge. "Say, 'I'll check back in with you in an hour, and we'll see if we've gotten these reports/organizing chores done.'" Or promise yourself motivational rewards for completing the task at hand, suggests Dr. Salerno.



Houseplants are great for cleaning the air of energy-zapping toxins.

**ENERGY ZAPPER POOR POSTURE** You already know that not sitting or standing straight is bad for your body. But all that hunching over a computer screen or cradling a phone on your shoulder wreaks havoc on your energy level, too, says Pia Martin, a San Diego health and wellness chiropractor. "When you sit for long periods, you tend to slump forward, leading to rounded shoulders and a tilted lower spine. Your muscles contract, and blood flow is impaired," which limits the amount of oxygen to your brain.

**ENERGY FIX** Sit up straight! Your legs should be at right angles to the floor, your arms at right angles to your keyboard. Be conscious of keeping your shoulders down, not up near your ears. Adjust your computer screen so your eyes gaze at the middle of it. And don't just sit there—if

you have to, set a timer to go off hourly to remind you to get up, stretch and get a drink of water. When you get back to your desk, do a quick posture check: Shoulders down!

**ENERGY ZAPPER TOXIC INDOOR AIR** Humming copy machines. Cleaning products. Dry-cleaning chemicals. Synthetic carpeting. Even the desks in your office may be contributing to the load of toxins you breathe each day, because all of them release chemicals into the air. "No one knows for sure how much harm these cause to our bodies, but they do build up over time, and can drain your energy by potentially interfering with thyroid function and overloading the body's detox system," says Frank Lipman, MD, a New York City physician and

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*Psst... Eating breakfast keeps energy high all day, so don't skip it.*