



All-day **ENERGY FOODS**

By **Celia Shatzman** for USA TODAY

NEXT TIME YOU FEEL THAT AFTERNOON SLUMP, resist the urge to grab a cup of coffee or an energy drink. Opt for a healthy snack instead. “Our bodies were designed to run on food,” says Nishanga Bliss, author of *Real Food All Year*. “Caffeine is really a recent introduction to the human food supply. We evolved to run on a supply of whole foods. Caffeine and refined foods—like white sugar—lead to an energy roller coaster.”

For long-lasting oomph, Bliss repeats tried-and-true advice:

Start your day with breakfast and eat every few hours to keep blood sugar steady. Bliss also points out that it’s crucial to include a balance of carbohydrates, protein, and fat at every meal to optimize energy. And you’ll get bonus points for eating seasonally. “Seasonal food is higher in nutrients because it’s fresher, so there is more to work with energy-wise,” she explains.

Keep your energy up by stocking up on these eight healthy, energy-rich foods.

1

Leafy greens

ENERGY-BOOSTING

BENEFITS: Nutrient rich and full of fiber, leafy greens also contain iron and calcium.

SERVING

SUGGESTIONS:

Choose dark, nutrient-rich greens, like spinach, kale, and collards. Different greens are in season year round, so branch out and try something new. To maximize a meal’s nutrients, substitute leafy green for sides like bread, white rice, or pasta.

TRY IT

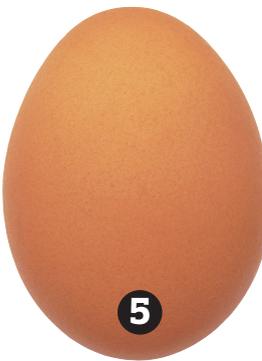
Eat sauteed spinach with your eggs to take your breakfast to the next level

All-day ENERGY FOODS

GRASS-FED BEEF contains important nutrients, but eat it sparingly for optimal health



LENTILS come in all kinds of varieties, like green, red, and brown



EACH EGG packs about 70 calories and six grams of protein—12 percent of your daily recommended dose



NATURALLY FERMENTED FOODS include dill pickles, sauerkraut, and kimchi

NEED A QUICK, ENERGY-RICH SNACK?

➔ Grab a small handful of trail mix. The dried fruit and nuts are rich in protein, fat, minerals, and carbohydrates, which provide a long-lasting blast of energy. A mixture that includes cocoa nibs provides chocolate flavor without adding sugar. Since commercial trail mix is often loaded with candy and sweeteners, choose carefully or make your own using this simple recipe.

Healthy trail mix

- 1 cup raw nuts (try walnuts, almonds, pecans, or cashews)
- ½ cup unsweetened dried fruit (such as raisins, dried apricots, or prunes)
- ⅓ cup cocoa nibs or chocolate chips

Mix all ingredients. Divide into individual portions.



Keep some trail mix in your desk, car, or purse for a quick boost on the go

2 Kimchi, sauerkraut, and dill pickles

ENERGY-BOOSTING BENEFITS: These naturally fermented foods **aid in digestion**, helping your body optimize the energy it gets from the food you eat.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS: Make sure sauerkraut is raw and unpasteurized. Look for dill pickles in the refrigerated section of grocery stores, and **avoid pickles made with vinegar**. Bliss recommends pairing sauerkraut with proteins like sausage, pork chops, and lentils. You can even use it as a garnish in soup. Kimchi complements meals with Asian flavors. Since kimchi and sauerkraut can upset your stomach if you're not used to them, start with half a teaspoon once a day and work up to a few teaspoons.

3 Unsweetened whole-milk yogurt

ENERGY-BOOSTING BENEFITS: A great mix of protein, carbohydrates, and fat makes yogurt an ideal source of long-lasting energy. Plus, it's chock-full of probiotics, which strengthen the immune system. And don't be afraid of full-fat yogurt. "There's been a lot of talk about limiting fat, but if you look at nutrition research, it's not the amount of fat that's problematic; it's the type of fat," Bliss says. "Whole milk yogurt tastes better and is more satisfying."

SERVING SUGGESTIONS: In many cases, you can **substitute unsweetened yogurt for sour cream**. Try using a dollop on your baked potato or to garnish a bowl of soup. To add a little sweetness, look to maple syrup or fruit instead of sugar.

4 Grass-fed beef

ENERGY-BOOSTING BENEFITS: Grass-fed beef contains more nutrients than conventionally raised varieties. It's **high in omega-3 fatty acids (important for brain function) and iron**, which is closely linked to energy levels.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS: Serving size should be proportional to your size. The palm of your hand is a good guideline for a single serving. **To protect fatty acids, it's best to cook your meat rare to medium-rare**. Cook tougher cuts of meat low and slow. "Grilling meat over a fire exposes it to cancer-causing compounds in smoke," Bliss cautions. "You can counteract that by marinating the meat in garlic, cilantro, red wine, or something that has antioxidants,

which can prevent the formation of those harmful compounds."

5 Eggs

ENERGY-BOOSTING BENEFITS: Eggs are **nutrient dense and packed with protein**.

Consider buying free-range or organic eggs to get an extra boost of nutrition.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS: **Heating the cholesterol in egg yolks reduces the nutritional value**, so Bliss recommends cooking eggs just until the yolk is set but still runny.

6 Garlic

ENERGY-BOOSTING BENEFITS: Garlic is a true nutritional multitasker. It **helps promote good digestion, protects against heart disease, and boosts the immune system**.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS: Garlic goes with practically everything, so don't be afraid to experiment. Saute it with greens, mince and toss it in a salad dressing, or whip up a garlicky batch of hummus. Cooking garlic changes its nutritional makeup slightly, so try to **eat both cooked and raw garlic regularly**.

7 Lentils

ENERGY-BOOSTING BENEFITS: Lentils are **high in protein, fiber, and antioxidants**. And when it comes to energy, they contain the ideal mix of carbohydrates, protein, and fat.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS: Lentil soup makes a great lunch. For a double dose of energy, garnish with yogurt or sauerkraut. **Sprinkle some lentils into a green salad or serve them as a side dish at dinner**. "You're getting a lot more vitamins, minerals, and fiber with lentils than you would with a starchy side," Bliss says.

8 Coconut oil

ENERGY-BOOSTING BENEFITS: Coconut oil is **rich in medium-chain fatty acids, which the body prefers to burn rather than put in storage**, making it an immediate source of long-lasting energy. Coconut oil also strengthens the immune system and may help prevent heart disease.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS: **Use coconut oil for frying and sauteing foods**. The distinct flavor works especially well with Southeast Asian or Caribbean dishes. Bliss also suggests serving a baked yam with sprinkles of coconut oil, cinnamon, and sea salt.

FATIGUE FIGHTERS

Power walk. Exercise is one of the best ways to get revved up, and researchers from California State University, Long Beach found that even a brisk 10-minute walk provides an energy boost. Plus, it reduces anxiety and stimulates your brain, metabolism, and cardiovascular system.

Freshen up. Chewing mint-flavored gum—or just getting a whiff of mint—triggers activity in the area of the brain that controls alertness, according to the Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation.

Grow some green. Researchers at Texas A&M University found that workers were more creative when they had plants or flowers at their desks. No fresh foliage? A photo of a nature scene will also do the trick.

Hit the hay. Your mom was right—getting seven to eight hours of sleep every night and keeping a consistent schedule will help you stay alert throughout the day.

Tune in. A study by the University of Dayton found that people finished cognitive exams 10 percent faster while listening to up-tempo music. Music also decreases stress and lowers blood pressure and anxiety.