Welcome to the podcast entitled Health and Wellness Briefs, tactics for a healthier and better you. I'm Dr. Bernadette Melnyk, Vice President for Health Promotion and Chief Wellness Officer for the Ohio State University.

This podcast series is brought to you by my CWO office and our wonderful Buckeye Wellness team. In order to provide you with evidence based micro learning modules to optimize your health and well-being.

Every podcast in this series starts by taking a dose of vitamin G, given that vitamin G or gratitude is one of the simplest research based strategies to improve mood, sleep and optimism and reduce stress and blood pressure. Please take a few seconds now to think about who or what you are grateful for today. Give a dose of vitamin G to someone today for even more benefit.

Well, today's topic is how to boost and sustain your energy throughout the entire day. Wouldn't it be great to wake up with awesome energy and not experience any loss during the day? I have a fabulous expert to talk with me about this particular topic, Doctor Brenda Buffington.

I was so fortunate to recruit Brenda to Ohio State to work with me and my Wellness team several years ago. She is executive director of our Health Athlete program, that is focused on boosting and sustaining energy. Welcome Brenda to this podcast, I'm delighted you're here!

Thank you, Bern, I'm delighted to be here. Love talking about this topic specifically, thanks for having me.

Great. Well, let's get started then. Let me ask you a first question. What are some research backed strategies for boosting energy levels throughout the day without relying on that cup of caffeine or stimulant?
00:03:23 Dr. Brenda Buffington

Yeah, I love talking about this because you know, if maybe some of our audience members are similar to myself a few years ago, I found that I would run out of energy before I ran out of time in my day. That didn't seem right, I didn't want to do that. So, I decided to look into this and Health Athlete really did help answer a lot of these questions. I'd have to say, in no particular order, let me just mention a few and I'd love to talk in more detail, maybe a little later as we speak about these, but one would be sleep for sure.

Sleep and getting good quality and quantity of sleep and you know it's recommended that we adults get between 7 and 9 hours of sleep. Again, we can talk a little more about that later too.

Another thing would be hydration, right? So, getting fuel fluid into us and there's some better choices and not as good choices and one you mentioned, caffeine is not a great choice as far as being a hydration tool for us, it actually is dehydration, caffeine is for us. So, we don't really want to depend on that and its fake energy that we get from that.

So, your point was taken, well, we do know too that we can get some amounts. The United States National Academies of Sciences and Engineering and Medicine has told us that men in general, depending on the activity level and body size, is about 15.5 cups of fluid a day, water ideally, but some others are good too. Women around 11.5 cups of fluids per day. So that can help us do a lot of different things, keep us energized among others.

Then, the next one will be fueling your body. There are a lot of different ways out there that people talk about fueling their bodies. Many times the word diet is thrown in there, but I really like to avoid that word. I'd like to just simply say, how can we best fuel our body with what we need, right? So, I don't know if any of you have ever been starving. Really, really hungry. And you note your energy level plummets. Your mental state is totally unfocused, you're even a little less than your best emotionally. A little short with people and just “hangry” is a great word: the hungry, angry one.

Specifically, we find from Johnson and Johnson’s Human Performance Institute that eating light and eating often is a really great method of fueling our bodies. In particular, trying to get high nutrients and lower calories with that. Then, we could talk a little more about 80 and 20 when it comes to need foods and want foods too.

The last point on this would be moving your body. Again, we could talk a lot about that one, but we move to generate energy, to increase productivity; I have found it even increases my creativity. In many different places from Mayo Clinic to the Cleveland Clinic to Harvard Health and the CDC have suggested that just by moving, we are increasing the oxygen and
nutrients all around our bodies, but especially to our brain and that can revitalize us. It can make us more awake and then make us feel like doing more. So, those are just some of the things that I would recommend.

00:07:06 Dr. Bernadette Melnyk

That’s a great start, Brenda. I remember going to the athlete and it was called “Corporate Athlete,” about 14 years ago. I remember one of the first things we were taught in this workshop that you and I now teach to people here at Ohio State is we don’t need more time, we need more energy with the time we have.

I used to read time management books like crazy because I always felt if I could just manufacture some more time, I could do so many more things. But I did learn some of these valuable tips. which we still teach today and your point sitting, you know, needing to move more because sitting is truly killing our population. We know that even if we sit 3 hours a day, we increase our heart attack and stroke risk by about 30%. But sitting also zaps our energy for sure, so I tell everybody to make it a habit. Stand more, sit less, move more, sit less, and you’re going to be amazed at how much more energy you have.

My next question is, speaking of activity, exercise is often touted as an energy booster and frankly, exercise is a great evidence-based treatment for a variety of chronic conditions. But how can different types of exercise routines impact energy level? What exercise strategies do you recommend for maintaining energy and vitality?

00:09:37 Dr. Brenda Buffington

I love that word, vitality. Yes, basically our vigor for life, right, our love for life. Well, really simply stated, as I mentioned before, you know, moving your body will require you to circulate more blood, which gives us more oxygen and nutrients and specifically glucose.

We know that the brain needs oxygen and glucose to stay alive, so it will revive our brain. So just by, as you pointed out, going from a sitting position to even just a standing position, let alone moving your body more than just standing or doing squats or something, we can use movement or exercise as a recovery break from mental or emotional stress and strain. I know personally I use that as a strategy very often throughout the day sitting being very highly mentally stimulated and maybe even emotionally stressed, I find that you know moving away from that and using body movement, whether you want to call it exercise or you call it gardening. Just moving that body, that that can help me recover and actually be more productive when I come back to finish that mental project that I was working. So, I would answer the rest of your question by highly suggesting that we recommend that three
days of about 30 minutes of cardio work. So, that is something where you would be continuously moving and it doesn't have to be fast, doesn't have to be high impact, it can be a walk, a stationary bike, a seated chair aerobics session. But we do want to continuously do that for our, especially for our heart, lungs and our circulatory system. Then the other really important one would be resistance training or weight training, or strength training. We're finding that as we age, we do know that our muscle mass will decrease unless we do something to combat that. We also know that by having good, vital and strong muscles that we're going to decrease the problems that we have when we fall, if we fall, we're able to catch ourselves and react faster.

That is something that motivates me as I continue to age, I want to be strong all the way through. Along with that would be the intensity levels. So, we could talk in more detail if you'd like about the idea of frequency. How many times a week I'm suggesting: three times of cardio, 2 times of resistance.

Intensity. That's a big one. We don't want to waste our time, so we want to make it tough enough, intense enough to really get something out of it. We're suggesting it at least be a moderate intensity, which would be kind of like (speaker deep breathing) where I can speak two words, maybe three. I can't sing, but I would speak a couple and may need to breathe.

00:12:50 Dr. Bernadette Melnyk

You know, a lot of people groan when they hear exercise, and that's why I think it's important to talk about this concept of just move or walk as a start and it don't set the goal so high that you fall off the wagon right away. Inch by inch, it's sinch but yard by yard, it's hard. We have wonderful research to show now that even 11 minutes of movement and physical activity really has heart health and energy benefit.

We are here to tell you, you can do this. Let's make a commitment to start somewhere and know that it takes 30 to 66 days to form a new habit. One last question because I think this one is so important. Mindfulness and stress management techniques are absolutely essential. What mindfulness practices or stress relief methods do you suggest for enhancing energy levels and reducing burnout?

00:14:31 Dr. Brenda Buffington

I love this topic. For me, I love to know why I'm doing something and years ago before I started any kind of mindfulness practice, even as easy as just breathing and slowing down my heart rate, I thought it was kind of “woo woo.” But I've found out differently and you just have to try it and I that would be my thing. If there's some naysayers out there thinking, I don't know, just try a simple thing and I'll talk about that here in a second.
So why? Why mindfulness? Well, because when we’re fully in the present, fully engaged in what is in front of us right now. We can be really, really productive. We can decrease our anxiety, which is always that worrying about the future, right? If we’re in the present moment fully.

We’re not going to have, you know, guilt and regret about something that just happened that almost vanishes in an instant. It's some miraculous thing, but it is something you have to practice. So, I would suggest practicing mindfulness by just observing your thoughts.

Sometimes when something happens that creates some emotion in, you just sort of press pause and think to yourself, OK, I am feeling angry. Identify it. Maybe it's, I’m feeling sad and then, let yourself feel it and know that you’re a human. That is a common humanity emotion. Another one might be practicing mindfulness by focusing intently on the task at hand. Something you’re doing right now. Maybe it’s breathing. Maybe it is just going to sit here and really feel kind of cool air coming in through my nose and then a little warmer air going out through my mouth. It’s simple and it’s amazing what that will do to your blood pressure, your anxiety levels gone, your guilt.

Another one might be a Zen proverb, really walk while we’re walking. Wash your hands and think that you are washing your hands, just be in that moment. Don't think about other things and this could be even used with mindful eating, really appreciating every morsel and taking your time as you eat that morsel.

Those would be the biggest things you could do. Even breathing, maybe it’s belly breathing, put your hand on your belly and feel it go out as you breathe in. Exhale slowly and just relax, let your shoulders relax. This is great stuff.

00:17:15 Dr. Bernadette Melnyk

Those are all great evidence-based tips and if you would like to get even more details with strategy, please sign up for our fabulous Health Athlete energy management program.

Thank you for listening to our Health and Wellness Briefs. TuneIn to other podcasts in this series to learn more evidence-based tips for a healthier, happier and better you.