Vegetarian ? Can't wake up in the morning [1]

Dear A.

I am a vegetarian and frequently feel like it takes a long time to "wake up" in the morning and some days I feel like I never quite get there. I can't help but think this may be diet related. I went to a doctor for a test for anemia which was negative and I always try to get a good nights' sleep (6 to 8 hrs.). In the past I have tried to gain weight and failed miserably. I remain a little underweight but get a good deal of exercise each day. Any ideas?

Thanks,
Not worried...just curious

Answer

Dear Not worried...just curious,

If your diet is leaving you drowsy, it may be related to not eating enough calories ? especially since many vegetarian foods tend to be relatively low-calorie. Eating too few calories would leave your body without enough energy to "get up and go" in the morning. To increase your calorie intake, try buying a variety of nuts, seeds (sunflower, pumpkin, etc.), and dried fruits to make your own trail mix: each day, put about one cup into a bag and carry it with you to snack on. Besides added calories, you will also be getting a good source of vitamins, minerals, and some protein into your diet.

At meal times, include healthy size portions of grains (whole wheat, brown rice, oats, barley, buckwheat, etc.), vegetables, fruit, and legumes (dried beans and peas), and use a moderate amount of vegetable oil (canola and olive are good choices) for cooking. If you eat eggs and dairy, they can also serve as a great source of protein, calcium, and added calories.

In terms of exercise, aim for about 30 minutes of aerobic activity five or more times a week to get cardiovascular and energy-boosting benefits. Exercise in excess of about one hour of aerobic activity, five or more times a week, should be reserved for those training for a competitive sport (and who are eating higher-calorie diets!). High levels of exercise increase the risk of sports-related injury and may make it harder to take in a sufficient amount of calories.

Even if you think you sleep the right number of hours, keep in mind that some people,
particularly college-aged people, require up to ten hours of sleep a night. Other sleep habits might also give you problems; for example, it’s important to try to go to bed and wake up at close to the same time each day. Although this may seem nearly impossible on a student schedule, try to get on an even keel to start off the semester. If you wake up at 11:00 AM most days and get up for an 8:00 AM class two days a week, you most likely will feel like you never quite wake up on the two early days, even if your total amount of sleep is adequate. You may want to adjust your routine so that you go to bed early enough to wake up at the same time each day (weekends included), and see if your tiredness improves. If you feel overly exhausted or your drowsiness is interfering with school and life activities, you may want to consider seeing your health care provider.

Good luck getting up and at ‘em!

Alice!

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