

USC Center for Work & Family Life

Quick Strategies to Stay Awake

- 1 **Stretch** - Get your blood pumping (Try locking your fingers with arms straight, pull them up and back as you lean back in a chair).
- 2 **Do a quick exercise** - 10 push-ups or jumping jacks can pump oxygen into your system and get your blood flowing.
- 3 **Eat** - Tasting something tart or strong can also wake you up, like sour candy, a lemon slice, or vinegar. Also, smelling coffee.
- 4 **Chew on something** - Your body will prepare for food intake by releasing insulin, which helps you stay alert. Try gum or ice cubes, the cold will also help.
- 5 **Drink cold water** - Drinking lots of fluids can keep you hydrated so your body doesn't tire, and force you to keep getting up for the restroom.
- 6 **Brush your teeth and wash your face**- The cold water and minty tingle from toothpaste can stimulate your senses and wake you up.
- 7 **Talk to someone** - Having a conversation can perk your mind and wake you up. Explain a topic to a colleague, or excuse yourself to take a walk and make a call.
- 8 **Stand up while you do work.** - It eases back and neck strain, and encourages blood circulation.
- 9 **Escape** - Try to take a little break by excusing yourself to the restroom, library, or outside where you can sit unbothered for 10 minutes if possible.
- 10 **Ultimatum** - If you are on the verge of collapse, go home sick. You may just need a day to recharge.

DO NOT: Try to stay awake to drive. Drowsy driving is as dangerous as drunk driving (one all-nighter is equivalent to a blood alcohol level of 0.1%, which is illegal) Pull-over, take a nap, or ask someone to pick you up!

Long Term Strategies:

- 1 **Shift the cycle:** Go to sleep a half hour earlier each night, and wake up half an hour earlier.
- 2 **Don't hit snooze:** Your sleep quality after hitting snooze repeatedly is worse than what you would get if you just slept a few minutes longer.

Get up at a fixed time every day: Go to bed only when you are sleepy, but wake up at the same time even if you didn't get enough sleep, this way you will become sleepy earlier the next night. This will help shift and regulate your sleep pattern.

For more information feel free to call CWFL at (213) 821-0800 or visit www.usc.edu/worklife