

Originally from New York, but now living in Los Angeles, actress Lake Bell knows the value of maintaining fitness to boost vitality. A runner and keen beach volleyball player who also likes to take aerobic classes at the gym, she says, "I have a lot of energy."

get more energy

photographed by Anne Menke

styled by Vanessa Moore

We view energy both as a state of mind and a physical sensation. It is a delight in stimuli of a million kinds and the desire to respond to it. And we're not talking "see it—buy it", although sometimes a great-looking pair of new track pants can give your energy a kick-start. With actress Lake Bell, of TV's *The Practice* and new series *Miss Match*, as inspiration, we offer 20 ways, from instant fixes (see the blue boxes) to longer-term strategies, to flick the switch and rev up your life. *by Robin Powell*

1. Eat enough iron

The iron in our red blood cells grabs on to oxygen as blood passes through our lungs, and moves the oxygen around the body. Iron is also used within cells to produce energy. So it's easy to see why you'd feel tired, lethargic and unable to concentrate if you didn't have enough iron. Yet iron deficiency remains one of the nutritional problems of affluent Australia, especially among young women. Women need more iron because of the blood lost through menstruation, and high-impact exercisers need even more because of the large turnover of red blood cells when pounding away. The easiest way to get enough iron is to eat lean red meat three or four times a week. If you don't eat meat take care to eat vitamin C-rich fruits (such as citrus) or vegetables (such as capsicum) with every meal (vitamin C boosts iron absorption from both plant and animal sources); drink coffee and tea between rather than with meals (these both inhibit iron uptake); and ensure you enjoy a varied diet.

2. Don't eat to capacity Watch what you eat—as well as how much. “A big meal of pasta or rice causes chemical and hormonal changes that make you feel relaxed and dozy,” says dietitian Geraldine Georgeou. To maintain your zing, shrink portions and balance carbohydrate with protein.

3. Get enough sleep

Not sleeping enough? Welcome to modern life. The invention of the electric light has introduced one of the great experiments in human health—just how much sleep can we do without, and what happens when we skimp? According to Naomi Rogers, a sleep researcher with the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research in Sydney, we can't do with less than eight hours. Sleep less and expect a progressive decline in performance and alertness, with lowered reaction times

4. Downward dog Many yoga poses are designed to promote the flow of energy and those that incorporate a back bend increase energy through stimulating the adrenal glands. To energise and clear your head when you're feeling sluggish, Sydney-based yoga instructor Anita Jones suggests the downward dog pose. From a position on the floor on hands and knees, tuck your toes under and straighten your arms and legs, and lift your tailbone to the ceiling to form an inverted V-shape. Your feet should be about a metre from your hands, which are flat on the floor. Stretch your heels towards the floor and put your head between your arms. “The flow of blood to the head in this inverted position brings fresh oxygen to the brain. It's invigorating and refreshing. Breathe freely for a few breaths, a minute or so if you feel comfortable, before releasing the posture,” advises Jones.

and a tendency to nod off. There are also effects on health. People who routinely get around six-and-a-half hours sleep or less a night have increased risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and increased mortality than their sleepy-headed friends. The best sleep for most people, says Rogers, starts between 10.30 PM and 11.30 PM. “That's when most people's bodies are ready for sleep.” And, she warns, sleep is not like a bank where you can fix up your balance with a big deposit on the weekends. Sleeping late on Sundays in an attempt to catch up risks producing sleep inertia instead, which feels just like a hangover.

5. Think positive

Is it a crisis or a challenge? Are you expecting to be bored or to have fun? Is the hole in your tights the final straw or a minor setback? The way we choose to see the things that happen to us affects how we feel. A crisis, boredom, the final straw—these are all energy suckers, making us feel like crawling into bed. Choose the positive view and energise your response to life. The Roman Stoic philosopher Epictetus knew all about this back in 50 AD: “People are disturbed not by things, but by the views they take of them,” he wrote.

6. Improve your fitness

“The simple fact is that if you want energy you have to expend energy!” That's what Shane Bilsborough, a health and lifestyle consultant, tells his corporate clients. Start

right now, he says, and you'll feel better immediately. “The benefits are both physical and psychological,” says Melbourne-based Bilsborough, author of *Why Haven't I Lost Weight Yet?* (\$19.95, Penguin). He advises a pedometer as the best investment in energy you can make. “What we've found in our work is that most of corporate Australia isn't active enough to get the benefits of exercising a few times a week. If you're sitting at a desk all day you're only going to be walking 2,000 to 3,000 steps a day—and that's the energy in an apple! You need to get it up to at least 10,000 steps a day.” Do it to find extra energy.

7. Set achievable, behaviour-based not outcome-based, goals

“I'll lose weight and get fit.” It's a noble goal but it makes you feel as overwhelmed as if you had to climb Everest. Instead, set

8. Laugh A good laugh increases your heart rate, improves blood flow and may also improve immune system function. It also feels good and gives you a rush of energy, one reason that laughter clubs have been so successful in India. At laughter club meetings people get together just to laugh. Whether your giggle is a genuine response to something funny, or entirely manufactured, doesn't seem to matter to the body. It works either way.

goals for behaviour changes that lead to the life you want. Set a goal to walk for half an hour a day, eat seven serves of fruit and vegetables a day (see No. 17), or to swap the wine for ginger tea two nights a week. When you achieve these goals you'll find you have the energy to aim for more.

9. Drink enough water

The brain is about 85 per cent water so it's one of the first organs of the body to show signs of dehydration. Those early signs will be a brain fade—a loss of concentration and attention, a dull feeling. Don't wait until you get thirsty, keep well hydrated by drinking plenty of water.

10. Take a deep breath Yoga, with its links between movement and breath, is all about releasing, realigning and rejuvenating energy. For a quick energy fix, yoga instructor Anita Jones recommends a round of deep breathing. "Take a full, deep breath, drawing the air right down to the lower lobes of the lungs. Feel your rib cage expand as you breathe in and contract as you breathe out. Do a round of three to 10 breaths." Jones says you can expect the effects to last for an hour or so. Repeat when energy flags.

11. Cut back on drugs, especially caffeine and alcohol

Drugs affect your sleep patterns. Caffeine is a stimulant, so avoid it after lunchtime. (Don't forget about the caffeine in diet colas!) However, if you need a burst of energy, see the "Drink caffeine" box above. Alcohol can make you sleepy, but if you drink too much you'll tend to wake just hours after falling into a deep sleep. This is because alcohol suppresses REM or dreaming sleep. When blood alcohol levels finally drop there is an REM backlash, with more time spent dreaming much later

12. Drink caffeine Caffeine is such an effective energy enhancer for physical performance in endurance events that the International Olympic Committee has banned its use. It's also an energy booster for the brain, aiding cognitive performance by stimulating the heart and the central nervous system. Use it judiciously though, as too much carries a risk of increased blood pressure, anxiety, shaking, elevated heart rate and dehydration. Find caffeine in coffee, in cola soft drinks (which contain about half the caffeine of a strong coffee) and in "energy drinks" with guarana, which is a caffeine-rich extract from a South American plant.

in the night than usual. This longer period of light sleep can cause you to wake up, and to feel irritable and vague the next day.

13. Eat low-GI

To eat for long-lasting energy choose low-GI carbs, advises Sydney-based dietitian Geraldine Georgeou. GI, or Glycaemic Index, indicates how quickly a food is converted to blood glucose. (It generally applies to foods high in carbohydrates, as protein is converted to amino acids in the body and fats remain fatty acids.) Low-GI carbs, such as oats, pasta and legumes, are slowly converted to blood glucose, giving a constant release of available glucose for energy. High-GI carbs, such as refined cereals, potatoes and white bread, are quickly converted to blood glucose and give an immediate spike of energy. "By including some low-GI foods in each meal, balanced with protein, you keep energy release stable," says Georgeou.

14. Turn off the TV

Most people in the industrialised world spend half of the time they don't spend working or sleeping watching television.

That's an average of three hours a day. So it must make us feel good, right? Psychologists Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi decided to find out. They gave people beepers and randomly beeped them through the day to discover what they were doing and how they were feeling. People beeped while watching TV

16. Increase your heart rate Bring fresh oxygen to the brain, rev up body temperature and metabolism, speed up burning of glucose and fat from muscles: get all this and more, simply by increasing your heart rate for just a few moments. Shane Bilborough's No. 1 tip for instant energy is simple: just run up a flight of stairs. "It's like shaking a snow dome," he says, "everything gets moving."

15. Eat high-GI Fast-energy food has its place. Athletes get the perfect blend of quick- and slow-release energy by balancing high- and low-GI carbs. Geraldine Georgeou advises eating a load of low-GI carbs, such as pasta, the night before a sporting event, another low-GI meal two hours before the event, and quickly replacing lost energy afterwards with a high-GI sports drink or white-bread sandwich. For those of us competing in real life, the best energy mix comes from meals based on low-GI carbohydrates and protein.

felt relaxed and passive—studies measuring brainwave activity show less mental stimulation during TV viewing than during reading). But after watching, the feelings of

relaxation disappeared, although the feelings of passivity and lowered alertness continued. People reported worse moods after watching than before. As viewing time increased the impact on mood and energy levels worsened. People reported feeling as though watching TV had sucked out their energy. You've been warned!

17. Eat plenty of fresh food

There's nothing like a low-grade infection to sap your energy; and there's nothing like a diet high in natural foods to boost your immune system. Choose at least seven serves of fruit and vegetables every day,

18. Change your posture

We can all speak a bit of body language, but most of us forget we can write it when we need to change the way we're feeling. Melbourne-based psychologist Robert McNielly uses changed posture as part of his therapy. He encourages people with low self-esteem to stand as if they were feeling confident. Incredibly, the feelings follow the movement. So, for a rush of energy, stand on a table, feet hip-width apart, arms spread out to the sides at shoulder height. Look out over the top of the horizon and say loudly, "I am here. This is me." You'll feel you can take on anything.

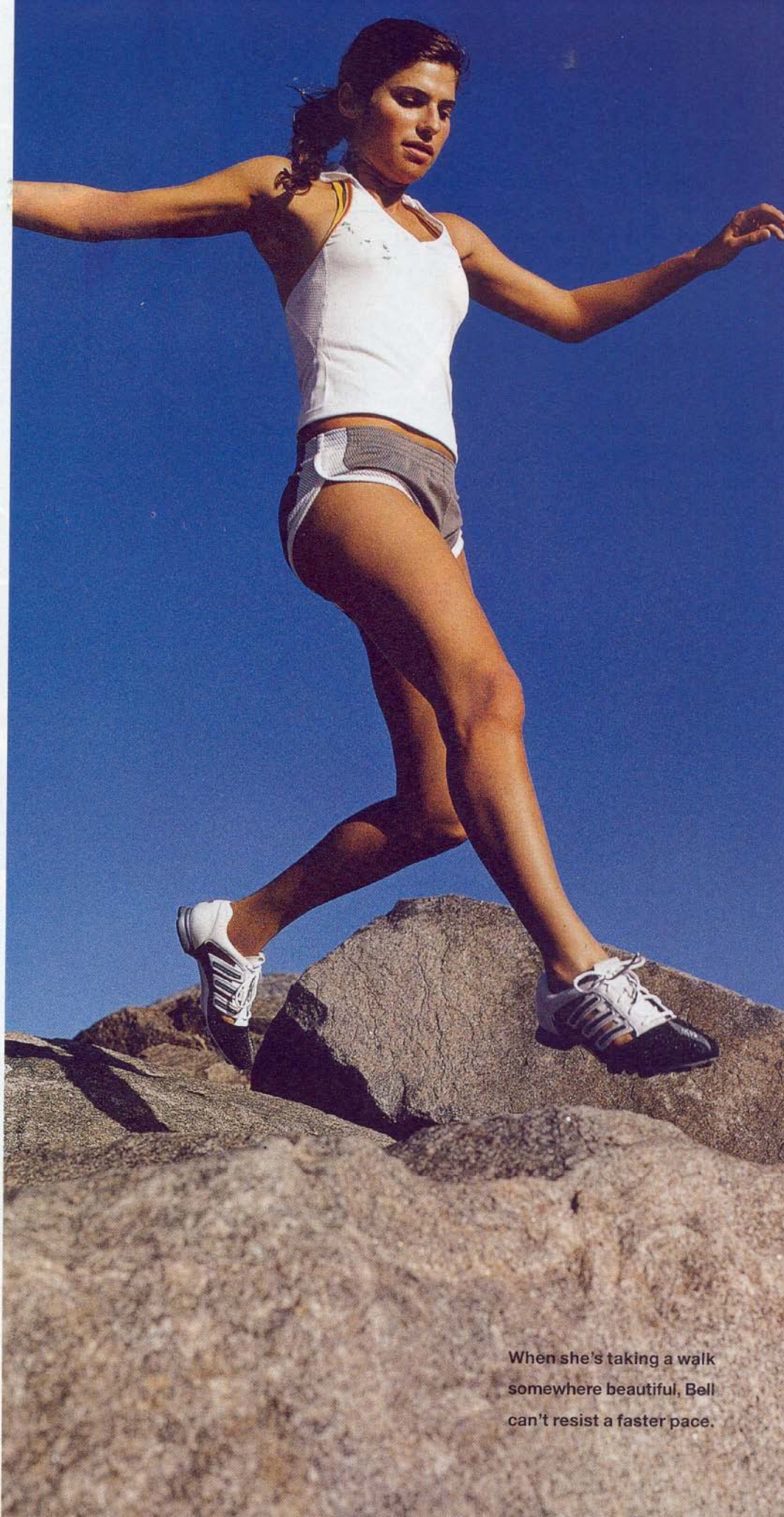
and add some nuts, seeds, whole grains and lean protein—which is an excellent source of available zinc, vital to a healthy immune system.

19. Walk somewhere beautiful

Beauty is invigorating, natural beauty even more so. But don't just walk, really look, feel, smell and admire the beauty around you. Do this at least once a week.

20. Do something for someone else

Quite simply, there's nothing more exhausting than self-absorption. ■



When she's taking a walk somewhere beautiful, Bell can't resist a faster pace.