

Soul Boosters

20 WAYS TO GROW YOUR HEART

One the ways to successfully navigate your N.I.C.U. experience is by having an unlimited supply of energy. You'll need to be able to draw on your energy pool at any time of the day or night to keep your spirits high, your attention on the most important things, and to generally live the *Preemie Parents*™ principles. Here are 20 proven ways to increase your energy – spiritually, mentally, and physically.

1. Eat a balanced, low-glycemic (low-sugar content) diet that consists of raw fruits and vegetables, nuts (like almonds and cashews), whole grains (not white bread) and fish. Most of all, remember to eat!
2. Get moving! Did you know that a brisk ten-minute walk will increase your energy and that that energy will last for up to two hours. Walk around the N.I.C.U., the parking lot, or even to the cafeteria to get some great food.
3. Take a power nap. Research has shown that pushing our brains too hard can take a lot of energy. The National Institute of [Mental Health](#) found that a sixty-minute "power nap" can help reverse the mind-numbing effects of information overload and stress.
4. Do whatever you can to reduce stress.
5. Drink less alcohol and more water. I love wine. In fact, it's one of my few vices – a glass of fantastic wine at the end of the day is always a perfect ending – no matter what sort of day I've had. I realized very quickly, though, that I'd need to reduce my wine intake and increase my water intake if I was to conserve my energy.
6. Breathe deeply.
7. Get off the coffee! Although coffee gives you an initial pop of energy, it can promote burnout. Gradually cut back to one cup per day. There are many great coffee substitutes.
8. Take twenty minutes every day for yourself. Whether reading a book, listening to music, meditating, or just sitting, these twenty minutes will get you farther than almost anything.
9. Celebrate all wins in the N.I.C.U.! The simple act of clapping and cheering changes your state of mind.
10. Focus on the positive. Being a pessimist takes a lot of energy.
11. Go home and take a shower. It will wake up your brain and your body.
12. Give into one of your cravings and indulge yourself.
13. Get a massage. That's a great energy booster!

14. Use aromatherapy. We discuss essential oils in *Preemie Parents*. Peppermint, ginger, and citrus smells boost energy.
15. Listen to some music that is heart-pumping and makes you want to dance.
16. Avoid people who sap your energy.
17. Review all that you accomplished each day. The act of celebrating your own successes will give you massive energy.
18. Help someone or volunteer. Being of service to others gives an instant energy boost.
19. As difficult as it may be at times, you must get on a regular sleep schedule. When you do sleep, be sure that you're getting a great night's sleep, even if it's for just a few hours.
20. Stay social. Although you may be spending most of your time in the hospital, stay connected friends and family. A good laugh a few times a day will keep your spirits up.