

WHEN YOU'RE THE ZOMBIE

We know it's not pretty, but take a good, hard look at the illustration below. One side has seen better days, the other looks like an extra on *The Walking Dead*. Use our prompts to help expose what's causing the hellishly exhausted feeling that more than half of you reported. Then learn how to put a stop to it once and for all.

YOU'RE TIRED

YOUR SLEEP SCHED IS WONKY.

You should be clocking seven hours of uninterrupted Zs every night, according to current recs from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Just as crucial is a regular sleep-wake pattern, says Timothy Morgenthaler, M.D., a sleep specialist at the Mayo Clinic. Consistently going to bed and waking at the same time every day (or within a half-hour of it) helps your body know when to be alert and when to snooze. Sorry, no easier way!

YOUR SLEEP HYGIENE SUCKS.

Putzing around on your iPad, firing off e-mails on your laptop, or watching TV in the hour or two before your head hits the pillow could be revving up your brain. (Electronics emit a blue light that can disrupt the sleep hormone melatonin.) Trading those go-tos for a chill ritual, like taking a bath, and keeping your bedroom cool and quiet can help.

YOU HAVE A SNEAKY SLEEP DISORDER.

If your habits are A+ and you're still not waking up refreshed, a disorder might be afoot. Keep a sleep diary for two typical weeks (so, you know, not when you're at a bachelorette weekend) and note the time you're going to bed, your pre-sleep activities, any awakenings, the amount of time needed to fall asleep, when you're getting up in the a.m. and how refreshed you feel. Once you're armed with these details, meet with your doc. She may want you to sign up for a sleep study, a one-night observation that can detect disorders like sleep apnea (where your airway can get blocked).



YOU'RE FATIGUED

YOU DON'T EVEN RECOGNIZE THE CHICK IN THE MIRROR.

We're talking drastic changes in skin, weight, and hair. When these occur along with fatigue, they could signal thyroid issues. Putting on pounds (or feeling bloated) could indicate that it's underactive, whereas weight loss can hint that it's overactive. Hair thinning (overall or in patches) and crazy-dry skin can happen in both instances.

YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE ALWAYS WADING THROUGH PEA SOUP.

It could be systemic exertion intolerance disease (formerly chronic fatigue syndrome—whew, some name change!), which can be tough to diagnose. That's because many of the symptoms (e.g., memory loss, headaches) can often be attributed to other health issues. Docs aren't sure what causes it, but anecdotal evidence suggests some viral infections, including Epstein-Barr, may be connected.

YOUR MOOD'S BEEN WAY LOW.

Depression messes with your body and mind, and fatigue crashes the crappy party. Think back on the past month. Maybe you've been nursing a persistent empty feeling and haven't felt like doing things that used to get you pumped.

OK, SO NOW WHAT?

Your doc will want a detailed medical history. Ask your family what diseases or conditions run on either side. Then jot down any physical, mental, or emotional changes in the past few months. The more info, the more helpful your doc can be. Land of the Actually Living, here you come! ■