

## Tips for shift workers and night workers

Thank you for working as a shift worker or night worker to support the ongoing provision of support to people who use alcohol and/or other drugs.

Sleep difficulties are risky. Not having sleep for 24 hours puts you at the same risk as driving with a blood alcohol content of 0.08. Fatigue can impact on your safety getting to or from work, as well as the service you can provide. It can also be stressful.

The following are some ideas to safeguard your wellbeing as a shift or night worker:

- Regularly check in with your own wellbeing.
- Prioritise sleep, even though it may be difficult to sleep well or enough during the day compared to sleeping at night. The average person who works shifts sleep one less hour compared to those who don't.
- Enhance the opportunities for sleep. Since it may take you longer to fall asleep, leave more time for rest. Ensure your environment maximises the opportunities for sleep including reducing technology interruptions and controlling temperature, light and sound.
- Use your breaks wisely. Choose from having active or restful breaks. Take a short nap (less than 15 minutes) if your shift allows it and then allow time to warm up before resuming work or any potentially dangerous activities (including driving).
- Your hunger cues maybe affected by changes to your body clock. Where possible keep a routine with meals, e.g. ensuring you have your first meal within two hours of waking up and eating a meal every 3-4 hours. Try to reach your nutrition targets, e.g. 5 serves of vegetables, 2 serves of fruit and enough water. Meal prepping may help you avoid relying on takeaway food options.
- Try not to rely on substances. Avoid caffeine, sleeping medications and alcohol particularly before sleeping. Consuming caffeine during your shift can interfere with your sleep. Instead you could try moving around on your work breaks. Although alcohol may have a sedative effect, once it wears off in 2-3 hours, it can cause sleep difficulties during the rest of the planned sleep period. Prolonged use of sleeping medications or other sedatives can also interfere with normal sleep drive.
- Exercise, particularly after sleeping, can help the body to wake up.
- Schedule time to catch up with others socially.
- Work with your employer to manage your shifts. Ensure there are adequate breaks during and between shifts. Where possible, try not to have back-to-back shifts. Predictable shifts help our bodies adjust. Rotate shifts forward instead of backwards where possible, e.g. after an afternoon shift, it's easier to do an evening shift than a morning shift.
- Reach out for more support when required.



**Watch the following video to learn more about night shiftwork and health concerns**

This video by Dr Steven Shea from Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) who measures the impact of changes to pattern of sleep; almost all of our physiology is affected.

<https://youtu.be/UV1VWwc9IN0>

## Use the following links to find out more



**Six Tips for Better Sleep With Claire Barker** - This is a 20 minute video from the University of Vermont Medical Center

<https://youtu.be/6g5aPQvnYOc>



**Sleep Health Foundation Tipsheet** - Answers 8 questions for shift workers and sleep.

<https://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/pdfs/Shiftwork-0815.pdf>



**Shifting nutrition** - Worksafe QLD has produced a document to help with nutrition for shiftworkers.

[https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/16416/shifting-nutrition.pdf](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/16416/shifting-nutrition.pdf)

# Worker Wellbeing

Download more at [www.insight.qld.edu.au/toolkits/worker-wellbeing/detail](http://www.insight.qld.edu.au/toolkits/worker-wellbeing/detail)

## References

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