



Making Shift Work Work for You

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Date: January 27, 2021

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EFAP Information

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Objectives

- Understand shift work and its effects
- Identify challenges around shift work and strategies to manage them



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Agenda

1. Common challenges for shift workers
2. Sleep
 - Sleep loss
 - Effects of sleep deprivation
 - Improving sleep quality
 - Napping
3. Healthy habits
 - Eating well
 - Exercise
 - Stay connected with friends and family

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The shift work trend

- **55%** of Canadian shift workers report doing so because it is the nature of the job (Williams, 2008)
- **66%** of workers in police, security, and protective services, over **50%** of workers in accommodations and food industries, and **45%** of workers in health-related occupations are shift workers (Williams, 2008)
- In 2005, 4.1 million employed Canadians (**27%** of the workforce) identified as shift workers (Williams, 2008)
- There are, for the first time, as many women as men working shifts (Wong, Mcleod, & Demers, 2010)

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Awareness

- What do you find most challenging?
- What are the benefits to working shifts?



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Your "body clock"

What is a circadian rhythm?



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Your "body clock"



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Common challenges for shift workers

- Physical
- Nutritional
- Medical
- Psychosocial
- Workplace risk



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Sleep loss

- Insufficient sleep (less than 7 or 8 hours) or poor quality sleep, leads to sleepiness and fatigue, along with decreased alertness and performance
- A “sleep debt” of about 2 hours per night shift accumulates (3 nights of night shift = 1 lost sleep)

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Effects of sleep deprivation

- Impaired memory
- Impaired immune system
- Effects on the metabolism
- Impaired concentration and attention
- Impaired higher-thinking skills
- Slower decision-making
- Slower reaction time
- Irritability



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Improving sleep quality

1. Control the environment
2. Educate your social circle
3. Sleep hygiene and bedtime rituals
4. Sleep timing



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Improving sleep quality

Control the environment

- Make it dark
- Make it quiet or use white noise
- Make it cool
- Make your bed comfortable



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Improving sleep quality

Educate your social circle

- Ask your family and friends to cooperate
- Every effort needs to be made to reduce noise and demands that interfere with your sleep
- Establish explicit rules about not being disturbed at times of day that could interfere with your sleep
- Social engagements need to be scheduled so they do not conflict with your sleep

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Improving sleep quality

Sleep hygiene and bedtime rituals

- Respect sleep, don't cheat and be consistent
- Develop a ritual before going to sleep
- Go to bed with an empty bladder
- Eat light
- Avoid stimulants like caffeine and nicotine
- Sleeping pills should only be used in consultation with a physician



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Improving sleep quality

Technology affects sleep!

- 95% of 18 to 29 year olds sleep with their phones next to their bed (Blodget, 2012)
- 50% will check their phones immediately if they wake up in the night (Blodget, 2012)
- The light from phones, television sets and computers disrupts melatonin levels and our body clock
- Keep electronics out of the bedroom and off at least one hour before bed



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Improving sleep quality

Sleep timing

- Experiment with your sleep schedule
- Keep a written record (sleep log exercise)
- Minimum sleep time = six hours
- Set a sleep schedule and stick to it
- Use "anchor sleeping"



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Napping

- Naps can help maintain alertness, performance and *safety*
- Naps can supplement insufficient sleep

NAPS ARE . . .

BEST if taken after 7 to 8 hours of main sleep and *before feeling fatigued*:

- Nap at home before night shift
- Nap before driving home after night shift



BEST if taken in 15- to 20-minute periods

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Eating well

- Eat complex carbohydrates like potatoes, pasta, rice and whole wheat bread
- Eat low-fat proteins (e.g., chicken, turkey, fish)
- Reduce highly seasoned, fried and high-fat foods
- Reduce caffeine-containing foods and beverages
- Eat small portions during your shift
- Try to reduce or eliminate sugar
- Avoid alcohol



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Exercise

- Work out before your shift
- Avoid exercise before sleeping
- Start walking
- Find a form of exercise you enjoy
- MOVE (e.g., yoga, tai chi, dance)



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Connecting with family and friends

- Ask your family what they need from you
- Ask for what you need and be clear and respectful
- Listen attentively when having a conversation
- Set dates with family and friends



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Arriving home safely

- If you are sleepy, stop to nap, but do so in your locked car in a well-lit area
- Take public transportation, if possible
- Call a friend or family member to come and pick you up, if possible
- Drive defensively
- Don't stop off for a "night cap"
- Vary your route

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Take control!

- Taking control of your environment can significantly reduce the potential challenges of shiftwork
- Create an action plan based on your own personal stressors



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Summary

- You have more control than you think
- Get enough sleep
- Make smart and healthy food choices
- Keep active
- Stay alert on the return home
- Make time for family and friends



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