

Sick and tired of waking up sick and tired?



Improve the quality
of your sleep and life
as a shift worker,
and increase your safety
on the job and on the road.

TSA
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U.S. Department
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Wake up and get some sleep!

Shift work definitely has its rewards—like the extra income, the lack of interruptions, the sense of freedom you get working nontraditional hours, and the ability to be home with the kids during the day. But working night or rotating shifts also has its drawbacks—and one of the biggest is not getting enough restful sleep. That can make you feel tired and grumpy. It can make it hard to get through work. And worst of all, it can cause you to fall asleep behind the wheel while driving home.

Additionally, sleeping during the day can make it difficult to get the amount of sleep your body needs. Some research shows shift workers average five hours of sleep per day, at least one to one-and-a-half hours less than non-shift workers.

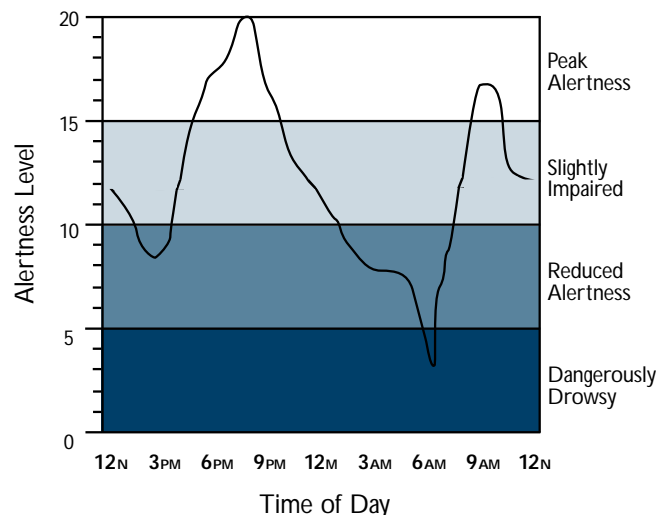
Regularly getting less than seven or eight hours of sleep in a 24-hour period really can lead to chronic problem sleepiness and cause irritability, crankiness and depression. It also makes it more likely that you might fall asleep while driving. And the only way to correct the problem is to get more or better sleep.

The circadian rhythm cycle (shown below) is something you can't ignore or reprogram, but relax. Later in this brochure you'll discover ways to improve your body's ability to cope with shift work.

Your body clock was set by nature.

The human body is governed by an internal clock known as the *circadian rhythm*. In each 24-hour cycle, it makes you want to sleep when it's dark and be awake when it's light. It causes periods of sleepiness between midnight and 6 a.m.—the “natural” time for humans to sleep—then again in the midafternoon.

But as a shift worker, you have to try to sleep when your body is telling you to be awake, and be awake during those dips in your alertness level when your body is telling you to sleep. And as you get sleepier, you begin to miss things you would normally respond to, resulting in careless and even dangerous errors.



Don't learn about drowsy driving by accident.

Perhaps one of the most dangerous consequences associated with shift work is sleepiness behind the wheel. The late night and early morning drive times are the most hazardous, with the majority of crashes occurring between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m. when the body naturally experiences sleepiness. This contributes to the high rate of serious injuries and fatalities for several reasons:

- Crashes involving drivers who fall asleep occur more often on highways and roadways where speed limits are higher.
- The driver's eyes are closed so there is no attempt to avoid the crash.
- The driver is usually alone in the vehicle so there's no one to alert the driver to danger.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that more than 100,000 crashes each year are the result of drowsy driving. Some studies have proven that roughly one-quarter of shift workers report having at least one crash or close call within the last year. In fact, research shows that drivers are just as impaired when they're sleepy as when they've consumed alcohol.

Drowsiness and drinking don't mix.

Drinking alcohol when you're sleepy only serves to increase your drowsiness and further impair your judgment, perception, and ability to react to road conditions and other drivers. It's a hazardous combination. How dangerous? NHTSA has found that nearly 20 percent of all sleepiness-related, single-vehicle crashes involve alcohol. Even if you've had just a small amount to drink and are feeling just a little sleepy, the effects of one are intensified by the other.

There are other driving forces...


The use of certain medications and drugs can also compound sleepiness. And the risk increases for people taking higher doses or more than one sedating medication simultaneously. Another factor to consider is your driving pattern—longer trips in terms of miles or minutes put you at a higher risk.


The best thing to do is "sleep on it."


The single most important key to eliminating most problems caused by shift work is to make sleep a number one priority. Set a specific bedtime for yourself. Get good, uninterrupted sleep at the same time every day, even on your days off. And even if you can't sleep more, there are things you can do to make sure you sleep better.

Steps you can take to improve your sleep.


Create a restful, comfortable sleeping place—and set aside time for uninterrupted sleep.

 **Make your room dark—the darker, the better.** As a shift worker, you're waking and sleeping against the natural rhythms of lightness and darkness—the most powerful regulators of our internal clocks. Your body wants to be active when it's light, and craves rest when it's dark. Try using special room-darkening shades, lined drapes or a sleep mask to simulate nighttime. Sleep without a night light, block the light that comes from your doorway, and if your alarm clock is illuminated, cover it up.


 **Block outside sounds.** Sleep can be easily interrupted by sudden, unexpected sounds—the screech of a passing siren, a plane flying overhead, construction work or a barking dog, to name a few. Use ear plugs, a fan, or turn the FM radio or TV to in between stations so the “shhhh” blocks out other noises and lulls you to sleep. (Just be sure to turn off the brightness on your TV or cover the screen.) You might even want to consider a “white noise” machine, which plays a steady stream of lulling sounds such as ocean waves.


 **Adjust your thermostat before going to bed.** A room that is too hot or too cold can disturb your sleep. Some research


shows that 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit or 16 to 18 degrees Celsius is ideal.

 **Keep a regular schedule.** Go to bed and get up at the same time every day. The best way to ensure a good night's sleep is to stick to a regular schedule, even on your days off, holidays or when traveling.

Improve other habits and routines that can help improve your sleep habits.

 **Maintain or improve your overall health.** Eat well and establish a regular exercise routine. It can be as simple as a 20- to 30-minute walk, jog, swim or bicycle ride three times a week. Exercising too close to bedtime may actually keep you awake because your body has not had a chance to unwind. Allow at least three hours between working out and going to bed.


 **Avoid caffeine several hours before bedtime.** Its stimulating effects will peak two to four hours later and may linger for several hours more. The result is diminished deep sleep and increased awakenings.


 **Avoid alcohol before going to sleep.** It may initially make you fall asleep faster, but it can make it much harder to stay asleep. As the immediate effects of the alcohol wear off, it deprives your body of


deep rest and you end up sleeping in fragments and waking often.

 **Know the side effects of medications.**


Some medications can increase sleepiness and make it dangerous to drive. Other medications can cause sleeping difficulties as a side effect.


 **Change the time you go to sleep.** After driving home from work, don't go right to bed. Take a few hours to unwind and relax.


 **Develop a relaxing sleep ritual.** Before going to sleep, try taking a warm bath, listening to soothing music or reading until you feel sleepy—but don't read anything exciting or stimulating.


 **Don't make bedtime the time to solve the day's problems.** Try to clear your mind. Make a list of things you are concerned about or need to do the next day so you don't worry about them when you're trying to sleep.

Work with your family members and friends so they can understand your sleep schedule.

 **Set house rules.** Speak with your family about your sleep schedule and why your sleep time is so important. Establish guidelines for everyone in your household to help maintain a peaceful sleeping environment—such as wearing headphones to listen to music or watch TV, and avoiding vacuuming, dishwashing and noisy games.

 **Keep a sleep schedule.** Let family and friends know your sleep schedule and ask them to call or visit at times that are convenient for you. Plan ahead for activities together.

 **Unplug the phone.** Be sure unimportant calls don't wake you up. Unplug the phone in your bedroom and, if necessary, get a beeper so your family can reach you in an emergency.

 **Hang a “do not disturb” sign on your door.** Make sure your family understands the conditions under which they should wake you. Make a deal with them. If they let you sleep, you will be less grumpy! And make sure delivery people and solicitors understand your sleeping rules by hanging a “do not disturb” sign on your front door, too.

When you sleep better, you feel better.

By following as many tips as possible, you should start to experience improvements in the quality of your sleep. It won't happen right away, but if you stick with it for a week or two, you'll begin to notice positive changes. Staying alert on the job will be much easier. Drowsy driving will no longer be a problem. And you'll be able to enjoy more quality time with your family—and they'll enjoy you!

Let's set the record straight.

Even getting one hour less sleep per day than your body needs can impair your ability to function. And contrary to popular belief, you usually can't tell when you're about to fall asleep. What's more, when it comes to staying awake behind the wheel, many common remedies just don't work.

These WON'T keep you awake while driving:

- Turning up the volume of your radio.
- Singing loudly.
- Chewing gum or eating food.
- Getting out of the car and running around.
- Slapping yourself.
- Sticking your head out the window.

The key is to learn to recognize the warning signs of drowsiness and to take corrective action.

Warning signs of drowsy driving:

- You can't stop yawning.
- You have trouble keeping your eyes open and focused, especially at stop lights.
- Your mind wanders or you have disconnected thoughts.
- You can't remember driving the last few miles.

- Your driving becomes sloppy—you weave between lanes, tailgate or miss traffic signals.
- You find yourself hitting the grooves or rumble strips on the side of the road.

Tips for getting home safely:

- Avoid driving home from work if you're drowsy. Some experts recommend drinking two cups of coffee, then taking a short 15- to 20-minute nap. You'll get some sleep before the caffeine takes effect, and when it does, you'll wake up and be alert for your drive home.
- Avoid alcohol or any medications that could make you drowsy.
- Carpool if possible, so that you're driving with someone else awake in the car or get a ride from a family member.
- Take a taxi or public transportation.
- If you hit a rumble strip, it's a sure sign that you need to pull off to a safe place, take a nap or get some coffee.

If you're still having problems...









Sometimes making changes in your lifestyle isn't enough. If you continue to have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep or waking too early, or if you or your significant other is a chronic snorer, see your doctor. Nonprescription sleep aids won't help you get better sleep. But rest assured, your doctor or a sleep specialist can prescribe treatment that can make quality sleep more than just a dream.



**Please
Do Not
Disturb!**

It's my bedtime!

Here are some ideas for helping your family and friends understand your schedule:

-  Keep a sleep schedule posted in your home that lets everyone know when you'll be sleeping.
-  Let relatives and friends know when the best times are to call or visit.
-  Ask your family to keep the thermostat lowered when you're sleeping.
-  Besides leaving you alone, ask your family to have "quiet time" when you're sleeping.
-  Arrange for a babysitter if possible for times when you know you need to sleep. Or try to set up a babysitting co-op with neighbors and friends and trade babysitting hours.
-  Schedule events and get-togethers for your days off at times when you're normally awake. Most people will be willing to accommodate you if they're given advance notice and they understand that your need to stick to a regular sleep schedule is as important as theirs.
-  Try creating new rituals for times when you're awake, like a breakfast date or an early lunch.
-  Hang this sign on your door when you're ready for bedtime. Then relax and sleep tight!