



Staff information

Managing Sleep and Shift Work

This leaflet was developed by Dr Julie Highfield utilising the Health and Safety Executive's advice for shift workers

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Sleep pattern

Daytime sleep is usually lighter, shorter and of poorer quality than night-time sleep.

If you work regular shifts, try going to bed at different times eg. soon after you arrive back from work or stay up and sleep before the next shift.

Have a short sleep before your first night shift.

if coming off night shifts, have a short sleep and go to bed earlier that night.

Promoting sleep

- A short walk before bedtime
- Avoid vigorous exercise in the hour before bedtime
- Have a hot bath before bedtime
- Avoid caffeine a few hours before bedtime
- Avoid alcohol before bedtime
- Do not go to bed hungry, but avoid heavy, fatty or spicy foods

People vary in how they manage shift work, depending on health and lifestyle. However, there are some things staff can do to make shift work more tolerable.

Manage your sleep environment

- Avoid using your bedroom for other activities such as watching television, eating and working.
- Use heavy curtains, blackout blinds or eye shades to darken the bedroom.
- Cooler temperatures promote sleep
- Disconnect the phone or turn the ringer off and ask your family not to disturb you
- If it is too noisy to sleep consider using earplugs, white noise or background music to mask noises.
- You might try a summary of competitive benefits at left and a brief client success story or some of those glowing testimonials here in the middle.

Physical Health

An unhealthy lifestyle combined with shift work may increase the likelihood of sleep disorders and sleep loss or exacerbate existing sleep problems.

Seek advice from your GP if sleep problems persist.

Family & friends

Working shifts that differ from the routines of friends and family can leave you feeling isolated and it is important to make the effort not to lose contact with them.

Make the most of your time off and plan mealtimes, weekends and evenings together.

Diet

Digestive problems are common in shift workers due to disruption of the body clock and poor diet.

Plan your meals to help you stay alert at work and to relax/sleep when you need to rest.