

## How to Start Adjusting to Night Shift Work

by Gerrard Mackenzie

The fast paced 24/7 economy produced trades and industries that need to be continuously operated, around the clock. With this comes the rising number of workers having to work night shifts to sustain 24/7 business operations. Along with this is the growing number of people suffering from various sleep problems, due to disruption of the body's circadian rhythm.

Sleep experts say that trying to get sufficient and relaxing sleep during daytime, while holding down a night shift job is "a losing biological battle." Our biological clock has programmed our body to a sleep/wake cycle according to light and dark - daylight being a time to be active and alert, and night, characterized by darkness, a time for rest and sleep.

Thus, once you work in the night shift, it means that your circadian rhythm, the 24-hour time-keeping system that regulates your sleep/wake cycles, becomes disturbed or disrupted. It means having to unlearn your natural tendencies. It is a tough job. Moreover, no matter how long you sleep in the day, nothing beats having a complete and satisfying night's sleep.

Still, there are ways that you can do to adjust with night shift work, albeit slowly. After all, all of us have the capacity to learn new routines and habits. You need to adapt your body into learning a new sleep pattern. This comes with several effects, like having short-term insomnia while your body is still undergoing a period of adjustment.

While undergoing this process you need to sacrifice some things in your current lifestyle and maintain a special attitude. You need to remember several important tips on how to cope well with night shift work and the effects of adjusting into a new routine.

You will be sleeping during daytime, wherein sunlight is streaming and the rest of the world is wide-awake and alert. So as you will not lose any valuable sleep at this time and rest accordingly, make sure to darken your sleeping area or room. Purchase blinds or dark shades. You might also like to try using a sleeping mask in order to block the light.

If you are easily disturbed by noises while sleeping at night, then you might be doubly vulnerable to all sorts of daytime sounds, which is numerous. Consider wearing earplugs.

You were trained, since infancy to sleep at night, when it is dark and be awake as daylight begins. Your habit cannot be broken too easily and you need implements to assist you in making your daytime sleep as dark, quiet and tranquil as possible.



Disconnect, remove or turn off all sorts of things that may create noise and distract your sleep. Since you will be sleeping while almost all the others are awake, make your family and friends understand that at certain periods during the day, you will not be available and that they should avoid calling or visiting if not for emergency purposes.

Make sleep on top of your daily priority. You will be quite unproductive if you become sleep deprived. Furthermore, sleeplessness can make you prone to accidents at work.

While you are giving yourself enough time to adjust with new sleeping patterns, you must also improve your habits. Do away with those things that would not assist you in going to sleep like drinking too much coffee, smoking and taking alcohol or dangerous drugs several hours before going to bed.

If you take short naps during your break time at work, you may find it more difficult to get to sleep when you go home. However, if you did not have enough sleep the day before you night work and then you feel tired and drowsy at work, it is advisable to take a power nap. There is no better replacement for lack of sleep than sleep.

Do some relaxing and soothing activities that will help wind down your body in preparation for sleep as soon as you get home from work. Stay away from chores that will stress you.

Consult with a doctor specializing in sleep medicine if you are still unable to sleep after several days of working the night shift. They may have some recommendations to help you adjust with your situation.

Gerrard Mackenzie is the author of the eBook *Supercharge Your Sleep* and has taught thousands of the stressed-out, tired and overworked how to overcome their sleeping difficulties and get a better night's rest. He is also a great promoter of the power nap.

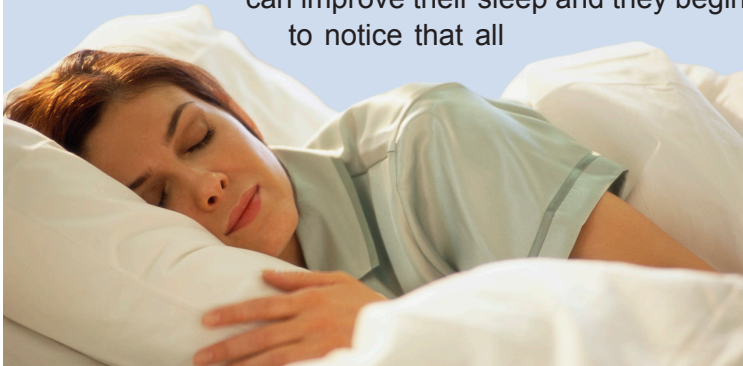
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# Balancing Productivity & Life's Challenges

## From the Coach's Playbook: National Sleep Awareness Month

According to the CDC, over 25% of Americans are not getting enough sleep. This statistic has likely risen due to the recent economic recession, as many Americans are probably up at night worried about finances. It is during such tough times, however, that the importance of obtaining enough sleep is especially important. Stress wreaks absolute havoc on the body, and these are indeed stressful times.

You may already know that sleep is necessary for the body to repair itself, and is a basic function of life. But did you know that lack of sleep increases your risk of heart disease, type II diabetes, depression, and even obesity? That's right...if you aren't getting enough sleep, it is likely hurting your ability to obtain weight loss goals and actually increases your risk of weight gain! I have seen this numerous times in my coaching sessions with clients. They are desperately trying to lose weight, yet nothing is working. I then do some digging and find they aren't sleeping soundly, or are only sleeping for a few hours. We then discuss how they can improve their sleep and they begin to notice that all



that stubborn weight is beginning to fall off! This is due to the fact that a number of hormones that regulate weight, as well as many other body processes, are released and balanced during sleep cycles.

It is recommended that adults get 7-8 hours of deep, restful sleep. It is possible that you are getting enough sleep, but that the quality of your sleep is poor, leading to that feeling of waking up and feeling as if you haven't slept. Sometimes there are underlying sleep disorders such as sleep apnea, insomnia, narcolepsy, or restless leg syndrome inhibiting your ability to obtain restful sleep. Or, if you have that sensation that you can't "turn your brain off" at night, it may be wise to take advantage of your employee assistance program (EAP) and get those things keeping you up off of your chest!

If you are having trouble sleeping, give the following a try: do not eat large meals before bed, avoid caffeine after 2 p.m., make sure your bedroom is dark, quiet, and at a comfortable temperature, avoid physical activity near bedtime (unless the activity actually helps you sleep), aid your body's Circadian Rhythm by going to bed and waking at the same time each day, do not allow the television or computer to keep you up too late, and obtain 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each day in order to burn off all that stress that builds during the day. Finally, if these solutions haven't worked, it may be time to discuss prescription or over-the-counter remedies with your physician.

- M. Scott Stanley, MS

## National Nutrition Month

In the interest of good health, why not try adding a serving of nuts to your diet each day? They are a great source of fiber, protein, and healthy fats, and have been shown in numerous clinical trials to decrease your risk of heart disease!



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