

# Wellness @Work

Summer 2009

## Sleep Hygiene Essential to Employee Health

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) view insufficient sleep and sleep disorders as public health challenges. Consistent lack of sleep is associated with the onset of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and depression, all of which threaten employee health. Sleep deprivation is also responsible for vehicle and machinery-related accidents which result in injury and disability.

We often think of sleep as a “passive” activity; however, the issue of sleep hygiene is recognized as an essential aspect of health promotion and chronic disease prevention in the public health community.

Fundamental to the success of all of these efforts is the recognition that sufficient sleep is not a luxury—it is a necessity—and should be thought of as a “vital sign” of good health.

### Challenges of Shift and Night Work

Working the night shift may increase the incidence of sleep deprivation. Shift work disrupts workers’ normal sleep schedules and circadian rhythms. The circadian rhythm has natural high and lows during a 24 hour period which influences bodily functions including digestion and alertness.

Studies show even permanent night shift workers never adjust to their schedule because they alter their sleep schedule on days off to participate in social activities and other necessary tasks.

### Facilitating Shift Work

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends the following:

- ✓ Avoid permanent (fixed or non-rotating) night shift, when possible.

- ✓ Keep consecutive night shifts to a minimum.
- ✓ Avoid quick shift changes.
- ✓ Plan some free weekends.
- ✓ Keep long work shifts and overtime to a minimum.
- ✓ Consider shorter night shifts.
- ✓ Examine start-end times—e.g., day shifts starting very early.
- ✓ Keep the schedule regular and predictable.
- ✓ Schedule the most demanding work early in the shift.

### More Information...

You can rely on MED-1 to provide more information on preventing injuries and illness in your work environments because we see your employees every day and know how important health and safety is to you.

### MED-1 Services

#### Screenings

- Biometric
- Cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Colo-rectal cancer
- PSA

#### Specialized Programs

- Health risk appraisals
- Immunizations
- Smoking cessation
- Customized worksite programs
- Drug free worksite
- Special exams

#### Education

- CPR/First Aid training
- AED programs
- Wellness coaching
- Health fairs
- Wellness education

#### Incentive Programs

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## Are You Getting Enough Sleep?

Notably, more than one-quarter of the U.S. population report occasionally not getting enough sleep and nearly 10% experience chronic insomnia. While there is variability between each of us in how much sleep we need, the National Sleep Foundation recommends 7-9 hours for adults.

### Key Sleep Disorders

Insomnia is an inability to initiate or maintain sleep. The result is excessive daytime sleepiness which can result in functional impairment. Side effects from medications, substance abuse, depression, or other illnesses can bring on insomnia.

Excessive daytime sleepiness combined with sudden muscle weakness are the hallmark signs of Narcolepsy. Episodes or “sleep attacks” may occur in unusual circumstances such as walking and other forms of physical activity.

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) is characterized by an unpleasant “creeping” sensation in the legs. This causes difficulty initiating sleep because it is relieved by movement of the legs.

Snoring may be more than just an annoying habit—it may be a sign of Sleep Apnea. Gasping or snoring noises interrupt the sleep of everyone in the room. Since sleep is not restorative, excessive daytime sleepiness often results. Other medical conditions such as congestive heart failure or nasal obstruction may complicate the condition.

However, new methods for assessing and treating sleep disorders bring hope to the millions suffering from insufficient sleep. Treatment may include a combination of medication and behavioral techniques to promote regular sleep.

### Shift and Night Work

Working nights or a varying shift schedule can also increase sleep problems. By practicing good sleep hygiene, you can counteract the possibility of sleep disorders.

- ✓ Avoid eating heavy and fatty foods before going to sleep.
- ✓ Avoid consuming alcohol before you sleep. Although alcohol can make you drowsy, it also disrupts your sleep.
- ✓ Use the bed and bedroom for sleep only.

### More Information...

CDC web site at [www.cdc.gov/sleep](http://www.cdc.gov/sleep)

For information on sleep problems and disorders—

[www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)

[www.webmd.org/sleep-disorders](http://www.webmd.org/sleep-disorders)

### Sleep Tips

- ✓ Go to bed and rise at the same time each day.
- ✓ Make sure your bedroom is a quiet, dark, and relaxing environment.
- ✓ Make sure your bed is comfortable and use it only for sleeping. Avoid other activities, such as reading, watching TV, or listening to music.
- ✓ Physical activity may help promote sleep, but not within a few hours of bedtime.
- ✓ Avoid large meals and alcohol before bedtime.



Wellness at Work is a informational publication provided by MED-1 Occupational Health System to facilitate health and wellness initiatives for employees.

For more information on any topics presented or to access additional copies of current or past issues, contact Tammie Milligan at 616.459.1570 or go to — [www.med1services.com](http://www.med1services.com).