

## SHIFT WORKER AND SLEEP

Work that is scheduled outside “normal” daylight hours (i.e. 9 am to 5 pm) is called “Shiftwork”.

The main complaint for people with shift work sleep disorder is excessive sleepiness. Other symptoms include:

- Insomnia
- Disrupted sleep schedules
- Reduced performance
- Difficulties with personal relationships
- Irritability/depressed mood

### TIPS FOR WORKERS WHO MUST WORK SHIFTS

#### DIETARY AND EATING PATTERNS

- Afternoon workers should have their meal in the middle of the day instead of the middle of their work shift
- Night workers should eat lightly throughout the shift and have a moderate breakfast
- Relax during meals and allow time for digestion
- Drink lots of water
- Cut back on highly salted foods
- Reduce foods high in fat
- Maintain regular eating patterns with well balanced meals (*avoid junk food & limit fat intake*)
- Eat vegetables, fruit, lean meat, poultry, fish, dairy products, grains, and bread in balance
- Avoid excessive use of antacids, tranquilizers and sleeping pills
- Minimize the intake of caffeine and alcohol
- Avoid fast food and vending machines

#### SLEEP

- Make sure that family and friends are aware of the worker's sleep hours and needs
- Ensure you have a comfortable, quiet place to sleep during the day
- Air conditioning, telephone answering machine, foam ear plugs are examples of devices that may improve the worker's sleep
- Make time for quiet relaxation before bed to facilitate better sleep (*reading, breathing exercises, muscle relaxation techniques, etc.*)
- Sleep on a set schedule to help establish a routine and to make sleep during the day easier
- Avoid strenuous exercise before sleeping because your body's metabolism will remain elevated for several hours and this makes sleeping difficult
- If failing to fall asleep after one hour, read a book or listen to quiet music
- If sleep still does not come, reschedule sleeping hours for later in the day

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### SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

- Schedule at least one daily meal with the family; this helps to keep communication channels open and promotes a good eating habit
- Socialize with other shift workers and their families; this helps to minimize the disruption that shift work can have on your social life
- Keep in touch with spouse and children daily
- Establish good communication skills
- Set time aside for just you and your spouse
- Carefully plan family activities; family ties are a precious commodity (*plan days off in advance if possible*)
- Pay close attention to physical fitness; a regular exercise program helps the body adjust to the negative effects of shiftwork and it can also help improve the quality and quantity of sleep
- Practice stress reduction
- Use a calendar to schedule events
- Try to prioritize tasks and tackle one at a time