



Sleep Better, Work Better



5 Minute Safety Talk

For many of us, getting enough sleep each and every day is, unfortunately, rare. When we lose sleep one or two days in a row without catching up on those missed hours, we fall into a sleep debt. Sleep debt makes us fatigued, and fatigue is much more than feeling tired; it is an impairment that can put you and your coworkers at risk.

Researchers say you need seven to nine hours of restful sleep every day, but according to an NSC survey, 43 percent of working adults admit to sleeping less than seven hours a dayⁱ. As a result, our workforce is increasingly fatigued, with one in four workers saying they have fallen asleep on the job in the past monthⁱⁱ. Often, people do not realize they are fatigued until they are nodding off, but impairment can occur much earlier. By the time you realize how tired you are, you could be dangerously impaired.

This makes fatigue a safety issue both inside and outside the workplace. Without proper sleep at home, you cannot give your best performance at work. Consequently, according to *Injury Facts*[®], approximately 13 percent of work injuries could be attributed to sleep problemsⁱⁱⁱ. You must learn to recognize your level of fatigue and take steps to improve it.

Get better sleep

Just because you are in bed for seven to nine hours does not mean you are necessarily getting the sleep you need. Your bedroom should be designed with sleep in mind and you should leave any habits that might keep you awake in the other rooms of your home.

Harmful to sleep:

- Staring at phones, TVs, tablets and other screens
- Lying awake in bed for too long
- Uncomfortable bedroom conditions, including temperature
- Distracting lights and sounds

Helpful to sleep:

- Establishing a family bedtime routine or communicating with your family the importance of your sleep schedule
- Going to sleep and waking at the same times each day, if possible
- Getting up when you need to, not repeatedly hitting snooze

Stick with it

Once you get into a positive sleep schedule, stick to it and be sure to prioritize your sleep going forward. If there is a TV show you like to watch, for example, but it airs after you plan to go to sleep, consider recording it or catching up on it the next day during your downtime. Simple solutions like this can help you sleep better without sacrificing the things you enjoy.

Don't give up on improving your sleep habits just because you hit a roadblock. If you aren't making enough progress, consider talking to a medical professional to find out if something else is hampering your sleep. Seventy million Americans suffer from a sleep disorder, but the right treatment can help^{iv}.

Accept no substitutes for good sleep

There is no substitute for good sleep. Though many of us use coffee or energy drinks to get an extra boost after waking, they cannot replace crucial hours of sleep. The same goes for our days off; don't miss sleep now because you plan to sleep in over the weekend.

If your employer has a sleep health program, take advantage of it and learn how to get the sleep you need to stay safe. If no such program is available, advocate for one.

Some employees, including shift workers, may be at higher risk for fatigue and can especially benefit from a sleep health program^v. Just don't forget your role in avoiding fatigue. Even if your employer offers resources and assistance, it is still up to you to put these habits into practice and make your sleep a priority each day, every day.

Take it home

Now that you are more familiar with fatigue risks, think about what you can do to help your loved ones get better sleep. Use the tips above to make bedrooms more conducive to sleep and to help create a family routine so everyone gets ready for bed at the right time. Teens and young children require different amounts of sleep than adults, so plan accordingly. With your help, your whole family can stay well rested and safe.

References

ⁱ According to a 2017 NSC Survey, *Fatigue in the Workplace: Causes & Consequences of Employee Fatigue*

ⁱⁱ According to a 2017 NSC Survey, *Fatigue in the Workplace: Causes & Consequences of Employee Fatigue*

ⁱⁱⁱ According to *Injury Facts*

<https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/work/safety-topics/work-related-fatigue/>

^{iv} According to the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research

^v According to a 2017 NSC Survey, *Fatigue in the Workplace: Causes & Consequences of Employee Fatigue*



NATIONAL
SAFETY
MONTH 2019