



Sleep Problems Lead to Other Problems

“Soon Margie was asleep, snoring like a busted chainsaw.”

Joe R. Lansdale, “Not from Detroit” short story

The National Institute of Health reports that studies show 75 percent of Americans have sleep problems more than once a week. About 50 million Americans suffer from chronic sleep disorders.

Some tips from The Mayo Clinic for addressing sleep problems include:

1. Cut out alcohol before bed. Alcohol, although a sedative, prevents deep sleep, which encourages light sleep.
2. If you do not fall asleep after 15 minutes, get back up, as stressing over sleep can prevent it.
3. Be wary of sleep aids, only using them as a last resort. Dependence on sleep aids could have negative side effects.
4. An alternative to sleeping aids is boosting vitamins and balancing hormones, which are natural options.

Going to bed and waking up at a consistent time throughout the week helps your body to become suited to a dependable routine. Finding a quiet sleep environment, exercising regularly and staying healthy are other great ways to make sure you won't encounter any disruptions of your sleep.

From personal experience as a shift worker with sleep problems, these problems can lead to obesity, hypertension, irritability, depression, heart disease. Get regular checkups and discuss any sleep problems with your doctor. If you work rotating shifts or work at night, tell your doctor.

A person who works rotating shifts does not have the option of going to bed and waking at a consistent time throughout the week. The recommendations from experts differ, and the tips and suggestions do not work well for every person. Some of the tips below are not practical, but at least consider them. Adapt them for your benefit.

Employers have some responsibility for providing opportunities for adequate rest, but employees have responsibilities for taking advantages of the opportunities.

Fatigue management is a shared responsibility of employers and employees.

Sleep Tips for Shift Workers from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine

- If you work rotating shifts, ask your manager to schedule your shifts “clockwise.” This means that your new shift will have a start time that is later than your last shift.
- Take a nap during a break in your shift or before reporting for a night shift. Even a nap of just 20 to 30 minutes can improve your alertness on the job.
- Arrange for someone to pick you up after a night shift, or take a bus or cab home. Drowsy driving can put your life and the lives of other drivers at risk.
- Try to keep the same schedule on work days and days off. Keeping a routine helps your body know when to be alert and when to sleep.
- Plan ahead for a major change in a shift-work schedule. Begin to alter your sleep time a few days in advance. This will make it easier for your body to adjust.
- Use moderate amounts of caffeine to help you stay alert on the job.
- Ask your doctor if medications, melatonin or bright light therapy might help you.
- Avoid exposure to sunlight if you need to sleep during the day.
- Make sure others in your home are aware of your work schedule. They should keep the home quiet when they know that you need to sleep.
- **Talk to a sleep specialist if you have an ongoing sleep problem.**

[Sleep Tips for Shift Workers](#) website link