



How is Your Sleep Health?

Sleep disorders involve any difficulties related to sleeping, including difficulty falling or staying asleep, falling asleep at inappropriate times, excessive total sleep time, or abnormal behaviors associated with sleep.

Opportunity for 8 Hours

Shift workers need the opportunity for eight hours of sleep. That means employers have to give them off duty time that is sufficient to get home, spend some time relaxing, have time to be in the bed for eight hours and attempt to sleep for eight hours before getting up, getting ready, and returning to work.

What can hinder us from falling asleep when we get home after working a night shift?

- Exposure to light on the drive home
- Getting involved in chores, discussions, or with media
- Eating a heavy meal or using caffeine
- Noise or light in the bedroom
- Sleep disorders, including the difficulty of sleeping when the body clock is timed to be awake

What are your strategies for getting rest between shifts, even if you cannot sleep eight hours in a row? I would often wake after sleeping five or six hours. Instead of tossing and turning, I would get up, have a light snack, do something relaxing, and try to get a nap before going to work.

Some sleep disorders are self-inflicted; others may be genetic; others are the result of our 24 hour society. I have a CPAP machine that I use every night, so that I will not stop breathing while I sleep. Although wearing a mask is aggravating, it is less aggravating than more serious outcomes, including death from not breathing.

It also helps me get a better night's sleep so that I don't fall asleep at work or while driving. It might be possible to stop using the machine if I was younger, thinner, had a smaller neck or paid more attention to my overall health and fitness.

It's likely that I am not the only person in the pipeline industry with a sleep disorder.

Some of the most common include: insomnia, narcolepsy, snoring, restless legs syndrome, circadian rhythm disorder, sleep walking, and sleep terrors. It is estimated that over 33% of Americans have some type of sleep disorder. But it is up to the individual to take responsibility for one's health.

- Keep a sleep log for a few weeks, noting the amounts of sleep and any sleep disturbances.
- Schedule an appointment with a doctor and discuss the importance of sleep and any difficulties you have sleeping.
- If you have any signs of sleep apnea, consider a sleep study to determine if you have sleep apnea and to determine a method of treatment.

Shift Work Sleep Disorder

Have you heard of Shift Work Sleep Disorder? When I worked shift work, I was often sleepy when I needed to be awake and awake when I needed to be asleep. As a result, I suffered from excessive sleepiness part of the time, insomnia part of the time, and woke at all hours of the day and night. Once I got up in the middle of the night, showered, got dressed, and was ready to go to work. My wife heard me, woke up, and told me that I did not have to go to work until the next night.

I hope nothing like that ever happens to other shift workers. If it does, tell your doctor.