



## The importance of sleep

*For employers*

Sleep is essential for our health and wellbeing. When we sleep, our brain and body recover and repair, preparing for the next day. Poor sleep can have negative effects in the workplace for tired employees, those around them, and can impact business.

Employees' sleep can impact their abilities at work.

Work can also impact employees' ability to sleep.

### Common sleep problems include:

- insomnia
- sleep apnoea
- over-reliance on sleep medication
- day-time sleepiness
- general difficulty sleeping (falling asleep or remaining asleep)

### Why your employees' sleep matters

Poor quality sleep, or lack of sleep, can lead to employees having:

- 1.62 times higher risk of being injured at work
- reduced concentration, focus and reaction time
- increased unethical behaviour (i.e., theft)
- reduced productivity
- increased absenteeism
- increased risk of physical (i.e., cardiovascular disease) and psychological (i.e., depression) health issues

### Work conditions that can lead to poor sleep

- non-standard work hours (after 5pm and before 8am)
- poor stress management strategies
- prolonged or intense mental or physical activity
- work overload (demands exceed capacity)
- repetitive work
- decision-making authority (low control over job decisions)

# What can you, as an employer, do about it?

## Promote healthy sleep

As an employer it is important to be aware of the importance of sleep and help promote good sleep habits.

- encourage communication between employees and management about sleep-related issues
- promote stress management strategies (diet, exercise, social support, relaxing meditation, psychological treatments)
- put up posters about good sleep practices (see useful resources)

## Managing risks

In addition to promoting healthy sleep, employers should try to:

- identify, assess and minimise workplace hazards
- investigate accidents, where sleep may be a risk factor, to improve worker safety

If you are having trouble identifying risks:

- Gain feedback from your employees about what risk factors they observe during their work. This may involve discussions or surveys.
- Review previous incident reports, insurance claims, complaints and patterns of worker absenteeism.

### Useful Resources

- Sleep health foundation Australia - (02) 8814 8655
- Safe Work NSW - 13 10 50
- This way up (for learning and dealing with insomnia) - (02) 8382 1437 [www.thiswayup.org.au](http://www.thiswayup.org.au)
- Fair work Australia  
<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/hours-of-work-breaks-and-rosters/breaks#2192-2197>
- Healthy sleep habits poster  
<https://mk0nonaveneyiqk9bxkb.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/sleep-hygiene-infographic-1.png>
- Workplace health and safety survey  
[https://www.iwh.on.ca/sites/iwh/files/iwh/tools/ohs\\_vulnerability\\_measure\\_guide\\_2017.pdf](https://www.iwh.on.ca/sites/iwh/files/iwh/tools/ohs_vulnerability_measure_guide_2017.pdf)

## Potential hazards

Identify, assess and minimise workplace hazards.

**Shift work-related issues (i.e. late night, early morning, or long shifts)**

- adopt a rostering system where employees can choose which time(s) work best for their schedule to provide adequate time for sleep and leisure
- implement company policies that limit aspects of shift work such as: frequency of night shifts, maximum number of hours per day/week/month, recovery time between shifts, factor in travel time
- Monitor rosters

**Work with high physical or mental demands (i.e. lifting heavy objects, concentration for long periods, repetitive tasks)**

- allow workers to perform different tasks so that they don't have to perform the same task for long periods
- encourage workers to take breaks at appropriate times, such as when they lose focus (this should be approximately one small break each hour)
- encourage use of stress management strategies

**Work that involves high risk tasks (i.e. operating machinery, driving vehicles, working at heights, or working with dangerous chemicals/materials)**

- ensure adequate initial training and regular re-training with a focus on safety
- ensure equipment used is suited to the task and is well maintained
- install physical barriers that protect workers from moving parts

**Environmental risks (i.e. temperature, noise, lighting, or stressful work environments)**

- avoid outdoor shifts in extreme temperature conditions and where this is not possible minimise exposure through job rotation
- provide access to appropriate hearing protection on job sites
- ensure adequate ventilation in closed spaces
- improve the comfort of office furniture and equipment to minimise long-term muscle or joint pain
- Suggest taking breaks outside in contact with nature

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