



*TOP TIPS*  
on how to manage  
**SLEEP**  
&  
**SHIFTWORK**



As our 24-hour society grows, more people are working night shifts.

Working at night can be very difficult for the body and mind. Nightshift workers often complain about finding it difficult to sleep during the day or on their time off. So how can we improve the experience of working nights?

Night Club brings sleep researchers together with shiftworkers and employers to explore how to have a better and healthier experience of working at night.

This booklet contains *TIPS* and *INFORMATION* on sleep health and what you can do to improve your experience of working nights.



# USE LIGHT TO CONTROL THE NIGHT

Light is the key to understanding  
the impact that working the  
nightshift has on your body clock

You have a **clock in your brain** which is controlled  
by light levels in your surroundings.

This system affects your body and mind – from your  
blood pressure and heart rate, to your hormones,  
behaviour and mood – EVERYTHING!

When you are exposed to light is critical to your ability  
to **wake up** and to **sleep**.

All nightshift workers are exposed to light at times that  
disrupt their body clocks. This is the reason you may  
feel **out of sync** with your body.

## TIPS

→ *Make sure you have a  
bright light on at home  
for half an hour when you  
wake up from sleeping*

→ *Turn off all electronic  
devices, such as mobile  
phones (blue light)  
when you get home*

→ *Aim to get at least 30  
minutes bright or blue  
light at the beginning  
of your shift*

→ *Make sure your bedroom  
is as dark as possible*

→ *Experiment with  
using orange goggles/  
glasses after your shift  
– but not whilst driving*

→ *Invest in good quality  
eye masks and blackout  
blinds*

→ *Limit your exposure  
to light after your shift  
and before you sleep*



# EVERY BODY CLOCK IS UNIQUE

Are you a lark or owl?

It's in your genes! Everyone has their own 'chronotype' – the body's system that decides **when it is the best time for you to sleep.**

Your chronotype will influence how easily you can **adapt to working nights.**

Knowing your chronotype will help you **understand** and **explain** your experience of working the nightshift.

## TIPS

→ Answer a simple set of questions to find out your personal chronotype. Follow the link to download the quiz and scoring. Download it here: [www.dropbox.com/s/2yy785fn9ejg4i1/Chrono%20Quiz.pdf](https://www.dropbox.com/s/2yy785fn9ejg4i1/Chrono%20Quiz.pdf)

→ Tell your friends and family what your chronotype is – it will help them understand. You can get them to do the questionnaire and find out what they are as well.

→ The effects of the night shift might be alleviated by exposing yourself to bright light at the start and during your shift.

→ Getting some sleep just before the start of your shift can also help. You could do this by sleeping in two blocks, which is thought to be better for night shift workers – your 2nd sleep block should ideally be 90 mins or 3 hours in length.





# HOME SLEEP HOME!

Improve your sleep quality by making your own sleep haven and following a sleep routine

To get the **best quality sleep** possible, make sure that your **bedroom environment** is right.

If you can't sleep, don't lie in bed frustrated – follow the **Quarter-of-an-Hour Rule**: if you aren't asleep within around 15 minutes of going to bed, get up, move to another room and go through your wind down routine until you are feeling sleepy and ready to return to bed. Don't clock-watch though; just estimate a quarter-of-an-hour!

## TIPS

### **TO CREATE A SLEEP HAVEN**

- The blue light from phones and screens can keep you awake so remove all electronic devices and other distractions
- Keep the space as dark as possible
- Use black out blinds
- Get a good eye mask
- Make sure your bed and bedding are comfortable
- Use ear plugs or try a white noise app
- Make sure the space is not too hot

### **SLEEP HYGIENE TIPS**

- Create a Sleep Routine
- Don't eat a big meal before sleeping
- Minimise light exposure for 30 mins before sleeping
- Keep lights low and lighting soft

- Try to go to bed and wake up at the same times each day

### **FOR PEOPLE WHO FIND IT REALLY HARD TO SLEEP**

- Establish a proper wind down routine
- Set time aside, ideally around 90 minutes, for doing something relaxing and enjoyable
- Get into night clothes
- Relax and read or watch a relaxing TV programme
- NO blue light
- Listen to music
- Only use bed for relaxation, sleep and sex! (Don't read or watch TV in bed)
- Practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation exercises. Download them here: [www.anxietybc.com/adults/how-do-progressive-muscle-relaxation](http://www.anxietybc.com/adults/how-do-progressive-muscle-relaxation)



# EAT YOUR WAY TO BETTER SLEEP!

Eating specific foods may increase your levels of sleepiness or help sustain your energy to stay awake

Learning to eat the **right things** at the **right time** can make a significant difference to your long-term health.

Night working affects the **hormones** in your body, making you crave sweet, fatty and high energy foods in the middle of the night when your body is least able deal with them.

For more information on diet and exercise: [www.sleepfoundation.org/shift-work/content/tips-healthy-eating-and-exercising-when-working-shifts](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/shift-work/content/tips-healthy-eating-and-exercising-when-working-shifts)

## Get **HIGH ENERGY FOODS**

from sources that will sustain your energy for longer:

- Try protein-packed foods like eggs, lean meats, fish, beans, pulses and nuts
- Fruit provides a great energy boost – bananas, apples, oranges and blueberries are really good
- Green vegetables like spinach can improve alertness

## EAT LIGHT

- Digestion can stop you sleeping, so eat a light 'breakfast' as a final meal before bed after work
- Try and introduce foods that encourage sleepiness at this meal, for example: walnuts, milk, yoghurt, peanut butter, oatcakes, baked beans, porridge oats, wholegrain bread and cherries

## AVOID STIMULANTS

- Limit your consumption of stimulants to improve sleep quality
- Caffeine has a half-life of 6 hours – do not drink this towards the second half of your shift

## TIPS

- Caffeine is in tea, chocolate, energy drinks, fizzy cola drinks, decaffeinated tea/coffee, some non-cola drinks, some workout supplements/bars, coffee/chocolate flavoured items
- Alcohol may appear to help you sleep but it does not help with good quality sleep
- Nicotine is a stimulant and will also reduce sleep quality

## EXERCISE

- Exercise can be beneficial for sleep, as well to general health.
- Doing 30 minutes of light cardio (walking or jogging) every day has been shown to reduce some of the negative health outcomes associated with shift work.
- Ideally do this exercise before work as this can stimulate your body clock and make you feel more alert
- Exercising before sleep might make you more tired, and aid sleep, or might energise you and make sleep more difficult – so try it at different times to find out what works for you!



# MIND YOUR SLEEP!

Not getting the sleep we need can have a major impact on our wellbeing and outlook on life. If you notice that your mood and motivation isn't great, try working on your sleep

Healthy sleep is crucial to ensuring that we are able to function at our best both **emotionally** and **physically**.

The relationship between sleep and mental health is complex, but we know that consistently **disturbed sleep** can put a **strain** on our bodies and minds and lead to both physical and mental health problems.

When we're sleep deprived, we often find it **more difficult to manage life's challenges** effectively, and can respond in ways that may further increase the problem. This, in turn, can affect our ability to 'switch-off' and get the sleep we need.

Learning to identify these **responses** is key to changing them and getting things back on track.

## TIPS

→ Be clear with family and friends about the need to protect your sleep periods and why it's important for your health

→ Sleep deprivation can make us more irritable. Choosing or scheduling 'good times' to talk can maximise the likelihood of good communication with those around you

→ Making sure that things that lift your spirits aren't

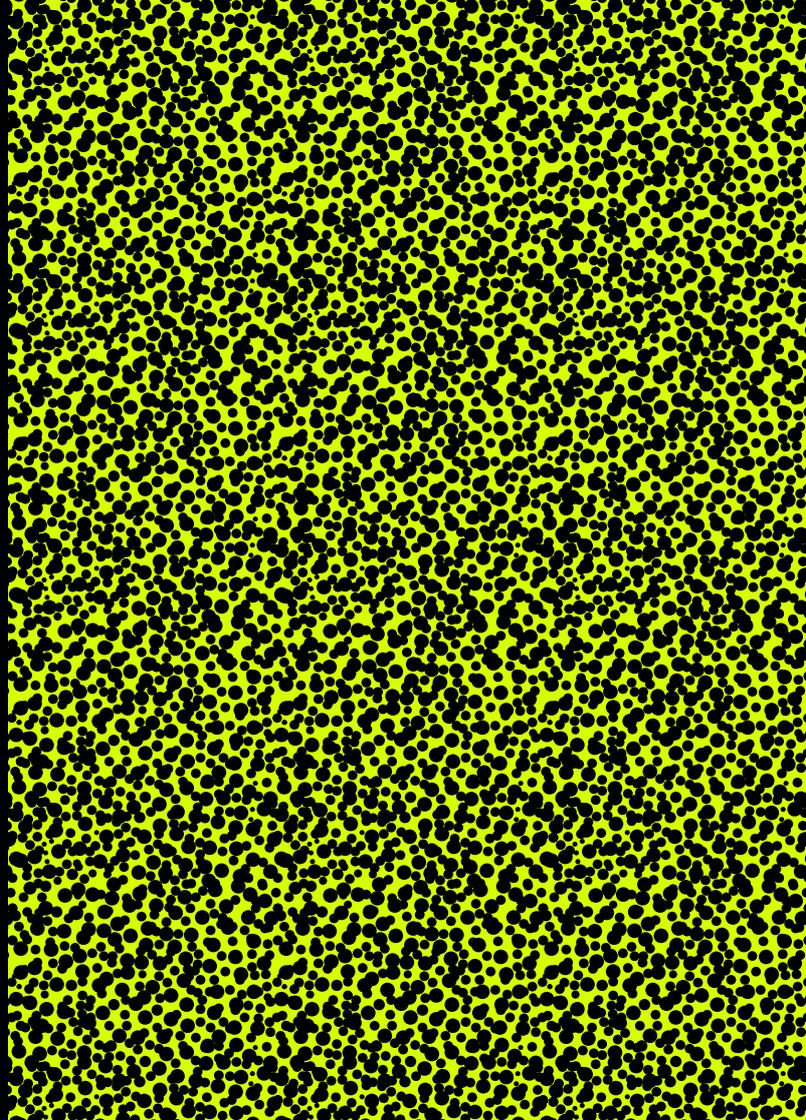
left out of the schedule is crucial for maintaining emotional wellbeing

→ Practicing the breathing exercises on the Night Club Tips Cards can help to calm a racing mind and provide some immediate respite

→ Be aware that although our mood is often lower at night time, interacting with others is a great way to maintain alertness and energy

***MOST OF US WOULDN'T  
IGNORE SYMPTOMS OF  
A PHYSICAL HEALTH  
PROBLEM. HOWEVER, MANY  
OF US FEEL LIKE WE NEED  
TO 'STICK IT OUT' WHEN  
IT COMES TO POOR SLEEP.  
IF YOU NOTICE THAT YOUR  
SLEEP IS AFFECTING YOUR  
MOOD AND FUNCTIONING,  
SEEKING HELP IS A  
SENSIBLE THING TO DO.***

Seek advice from your employer's occupational health or wellbeing teams or check out the links on the back of this booklet.



## WHO IS BEHIND NIGHT CLUB?

Night Club is sponsored by Wellcome Trust, a charitable foundation that is interested in finding ways to help improve physical and mental health. It is delivered by The Liminal Space in partnership with Co-op, John Lewis Partnership, Thames Water and the Sleep & Circadian Neuroscience Institute, University of Oxford.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SLEEP + HEALTH

→ Find out more about sleep and sleep health at [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)

→ Access mental health support at [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) + [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

→ If you're experiencing a mental health crisis you can contact the Samaritans 24 hours a day on 116 123



The Liminal Space



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