

# THE NIGHT SHIFT FOR HEALTH AND CARE STAFF

## WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

**Work no more than 8 hours a day, averaged over 17 weeks**

**Have at least 11 hours break between shifts**

**Employees are entitled to free health assessments**

## WHAT CAN MY EMPLOYER DO?

- Provide access to healthy food and **cooking facilities** like a microwave and kettle
- Provide and encourage taking **free health assessments**
- **Arrange transport, carpool schemes**, and consider **availability of public transport** to reduce employees driving after a shift
- Shift patterns are not always adjustable but, where possible, evidence suggests you can reduce harm by making a few changes:
  1. **Allow workers to pick** their shifts and **reduce nights** where possible
  2. Avoid **permanent night shifts**
  3. If there are **12 hour shifts**, there should be **no more than 3** consecutively, and they should be followed by **3 days of rest**
  4. Plan **forward rotating shifts** e.g. moving from morning to afternoon to night shifts

## WHAT CAN I DO?

- **Avoid natural light** in the morning if you want to sleep during the day- try wearing **sunglasses**. **Warning:** This is not advisable if you are driving after your shift and will need to stay alert
- Use **bright white light** during your shift and **dim warm light** when you get home
- If possible, **don't drive** after a shift
- Use the NHS website to educate yourself about 'sleep hygiene'
- Get regular **health checks**
- Having **small amounts of caffeine** at the start of the shift can help with alertness, but may make it harder to fall asleep if consumed less than **6 hours before bedtime**

## WHAT CAN I DO FOR MY PATIENTS?

- Reduce the number of times patients are woken in the night - **automate observation tracking** if possible
- Regular **meal timings**, even for IV feeding patients
- Let in **natural light** during the day, and reduce **artificial light** at night

## NIGHT SHIFT RISKS



**Heart problems**



**Diabetes and Weight Gain**



**Digestive Issues**



**Poor Sleep**



**Poor Mental Health**



**Cancer**



**Infertility and Pregnancy Issues**



**Relationship Difficulties**



**Traffic Accidents**

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## WHY MAKE THESE CHANGES?



**Reduced Health Risks**



**Increased Productivity**



**Improved Safety**



**Employee Satisfaction**

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- **Avoid alcohol** - it decreases quality of sleep
- Start a **conversation** with colleagues and management about night shifts in your company
- Keep track of working and **commuting hours**, especially if working multiple jobs

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# ADAPTING TO SHIFT WORK

## SHOULD YOU ADJUST YOUR INTERNAL CLOCK FOR NIGHT SHIFTS?

### Short shifts (1-3 nights):

**Do Not Adapt!** After your shifts, you want to return to a normal schedule.

Main Goal: **Avoid acute sleep deprivation** by getting as much sleep as possible (see tips below).



### Long (2-3 weeks) or permanent shifts :

**Adapt to the Night Shift.** For longer or permanent night shifts, aim to adjust your internal clock.

Here are some tips for better adjustment:



#### Melatonin

Can help improve daytime sleep and adjust your internal clock (consult your doctor).



#### Avoid morning light

If possible, stay away from natural light between 6:00-9:00 AM.



#### Use artificial light

Use bright artificial light at the beginning of your night shift to help your clock adjust.

## IMPROVING DAYTIME SLEEP AFTER NIGHT SHIFTS

- Sleep in a **quiet, dark room** as soon as possible after your shift.
- Use **eye masks, blackout curtains, and ear plugs** to create a good sleep environment.

## HOW TO COUNTER FATIGUE

- Use **caffeine and bright light** during the first part of your night shift and reduce them towards the end of your shift.
- **Napping** can maintain or even improve performance and alertness 2 to 12 hours following the nap.