

## RESILIENCE TIPS

# Sleep Tips for Night Shift Workers

For medical professionals working night shifts, getting adequate sleep can be a challenge. Review the evidence-based "Top 10 Tips" below from the CDC's NIOSH training to help you sleep better.

**Remember**, some of our recommendations might not work for everyone, so take your time finding the strategy that suits you best.

## 1. Make sleep a priority to avoid "sleep debt"

While you may feel tempted to handle errands or responsibilities right after your night shift, putting off sleep can trigger a dangerous cycle of "sleep debt." Avoid falling behind on sleep by hitting the hay earlier and allotting extra time to catch up on that much-needed R&R.

## 2. Sleep as long as possible

Night shift workers usually sleep less and experience poorer-quality rest than their colleagues on day shift. We recommend spending as much time as possible in bed to prevent the negative effects of chronic sleep deprivation.

## 3. Try a quick nap before work

A quick nap before work doesn't just boost your overall time asleep – research shows that taking a nap 1.5-3 hours before your night shift can improve your alertness as well.

## 4. Don't discount light exposure

Light plays a significant role in regulating our circadian rhythm. Simply spending some time in brightly lit areas during the first half of your day can increase your overall alertness and energy. Reducing your exposure to light as you near the end of the shift can ease your body's transition from the chaotic workplace to your restful home.

## 5. Blue-light-blocking glasses can help

Before you leave work and expose yourself to sunlight, try putting on a pair of wraparound blue-light blocking sunglasses. These glasses block out the blue wavelength of light that signals your body to begin its daytime circadian rhythm. Wear them until you reach the darkness of your bedroom to help you sleep longer during the day.

## 6. Go directly to bed after arriving at home

If your body's circadian rhythm hasn't adjusted to sleeping during the day, you've only got a small window of time before your natural circadian-alerting mechanism kicks in to keep you awake. Help your internal clock out and get as much rest as possible before 2 pm.

## 7. Is a bedtime snack in order?

If you're hungry, we recommend eating a small meal that contains a high-quality carb and protein before you head to bed. Some examples include oats with blueberries, Greek yogurt, peanut butter on an English muffin, or eggs and toast.

## 8. Sleep in the dark

Daylight naturally triggers our circadian clock to wake us up. Improve your sleep quality by blocking out as much light as possible in your bedroom.

## 9. Expand your team

Getting enough sleep at home often requires a team effort. Ask your family and friends to respect and support your sleep schedule by cutting back on disruptive behavior and disturbances during allotted times.

## 10. If all else fails, try melatonin

If you're still struggling with the new sleep schedule, you may want to consider taking a supplement for melatonin—a hormone the body usually produces in the evening. When working non-standard shifts, taking melatonin supplements at other times of the day may help prepare your body for sleep. However, The American Academy of Sleep Medicine cautions that the supplements don't necessarily lead to better alertness during the work shift, so we recommend checking with your doctor first.