

WORKING WELL AT NIGHT

Before nights

- Make sure you usually have a good sleep routine.
- Get extra sleep before your shift. An afternoon nap is ideal as it reduces the length of time you have been continuously awake. A lie-in is an alternative.
- Plan how you will get home. Is there an option other than driving?
- Will you need to rest before driving home?



During nights

- Keep well hydrated and eat healthy snacks. Calories on nights DO count; they contribute to the adverse health effects of night working.
- Maximise exposure to bright lights in non-clinical areas.
- Breaks are essential: work as a team to cover each other for these.
- A **15-20 min** nap can significantly improve alertness.
- Longer naps may result in sleep inertia.
- Be vigilant for the 04:00 dip: your lowest physiological point.
- Work as a team to check calculations and be aware of the effects of fatigue on decision making.
- If you can, a consistent routine during shifts can help.



Between nights

- If you are too tired to drive, have a short nap before leaving work.
- Have a snack before sleeping so you don't wake up hungry.
- Go to bed as soon as possible to maximise the amount of sleep you will get.
- Do not plan deliveries or daytime activities for the days between night shifts. Warn your housemates that you need to sleep.



Recovery after nights

- Have a short sleep in the morning and then get up.
- Aim to go to bed at your usual time; avoid a long lie in the next day.
- You'll need at least 2 normal nights sleep to reset your sleep routine.



References

Royal College of Physicians of London. Working the nightshift: preparation, survival and recovery. A guide for junior doctors. 2006 ISBN 1 86016 259 2
M Farquhar. Fifteen-minute consultation on problems in the healthy paediatrician: managing the effects of shift work on your health. *Arch Dis Child Educ Pract Ed* 2016; 0: 1-6

Subject to Creative Commons License CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. You may distribute original version or adapt for yourself and distribute with acknowledgement of source. You may not use for commercial purposes. www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0



Association
of Anaesthetists

The Faculty of
Intensive Care Medicine

RCOA
Royal College of Anaesthetists