

Shift-Work

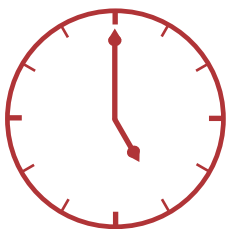
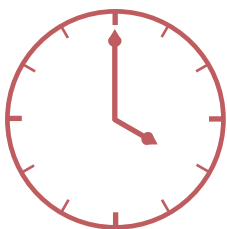
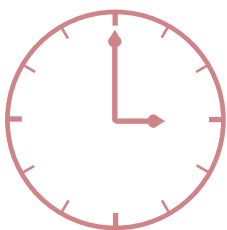
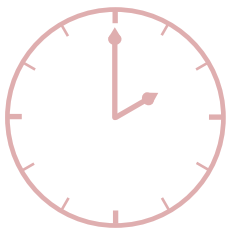
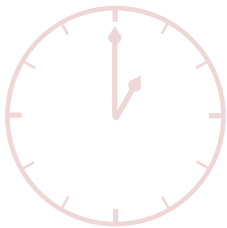
Report



Tina Hagen

Proven methods
that will help
you cope with
the effects
of shift-work

Shift-Work Report



Introduction

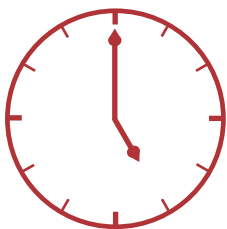
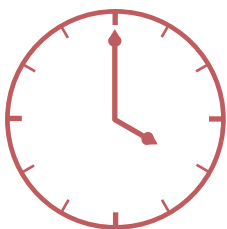
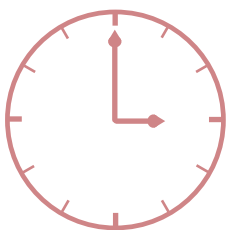
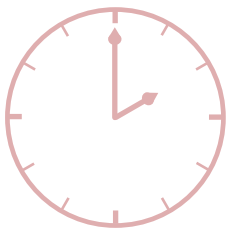
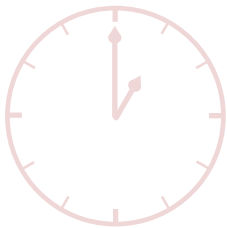
There are a number of different reasons why shift workers suffer from tiredness. The most important one, however, is their irregular sleeping pattern.

A majority (75 %) of shift workers report some sort of sleeping disorder. Even though they spend the same amount of time sleeping as people with 'normal' schedules, they feel that their sleep is far less rejuvenating.

The reason for this is that they don't get enough of quality sleep. Because of their irregular sleeping habits, they spend most of their sleeping time in the light stages of sleep. Their sleep is fragmented and the phases of quality sleep are much shorter.

The lack of quality sleep causes various symptoms. We can categorize them into 2 groups: psychological and physical.

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Psychological Symptoms

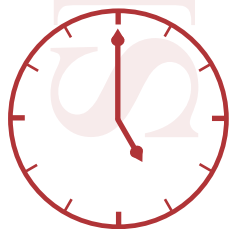
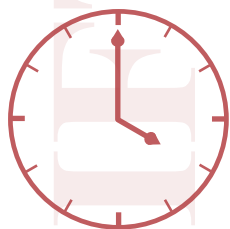
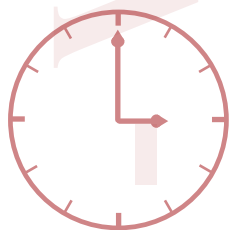
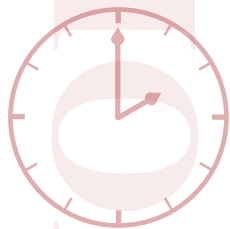
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Shiftworking can be very stressful as it contradicts your natural rhythm. When everything inside you screams that it is time to go to bed, you force yourself to go to work. These irregular sleeping hours can result in numerous psychological symptoms:

- Mood changes
- Irritability
- Tendency to overreact
- Crankiness

All these symptoms can have negative effect on the quality of your relationships. Many people blame themselves, but what they usually don't understand is that it is not their fault – it is their working hours that are responsible for these symptoms.

Shift-Work Report



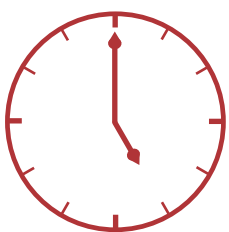
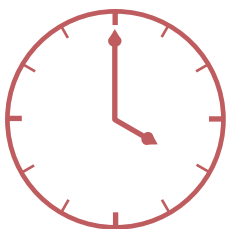
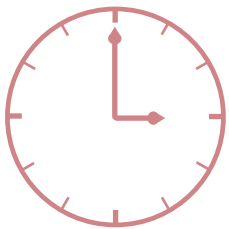
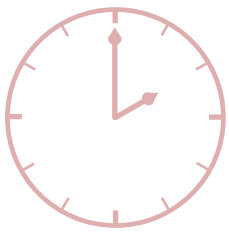
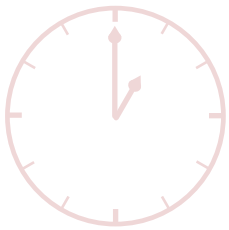
Physical symptoms

Because shift workers don't get enough quality sleep, they are often chronically tired. Even the smallest task can become a problem. Sometimes things get so bad that they find even the simple daily activities too burdening.

In time, shift workers tend to neglect their hobbies. They only manage to find the energy for things that are absolutely necessary. As a result, they stop engaging in the activities that they enjoy doing. This can cause them to feel even more tired than before. It can also significantly affect their mood.

Some shift workers complain about the loss of their sex drive. This can partly be attributed to fatigue. But there is another reason for this. Different work schedules often prevent shift workers and their partners from spending a lot of quality time together.

Shift-Work Report

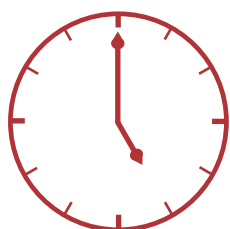
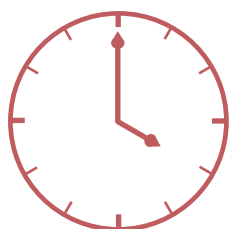
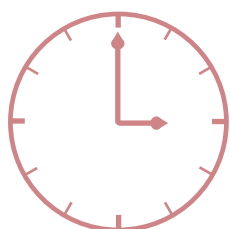
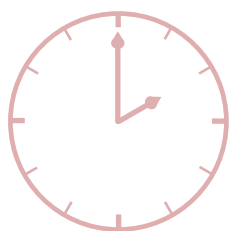
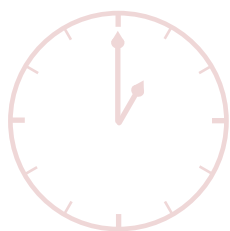


People that work shifts often have stomach problems. This is largely due to the fact that they don't eat properly. Their diet often consists from fast food and various snacks. To stay awake during shifts, they consume large quantities of soft drinks that contain caffeine.

Improper eating habits can lead to other health problems. Several studies have shown that shift workers tend to suffer from constipation. This is also the result of not drinking enough water. Constipation often goes hand in hand with fluid retention.

Other symptoms include dry skin, nasal irritation and headaches. People that suffer from these symptoms are more likely to catch a cold or a flu – not surprisingly, shift workers report more sick days than people who have regular work hours.

Shift-Work Report



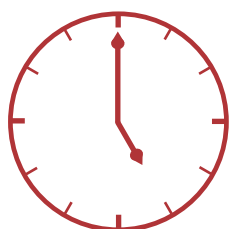
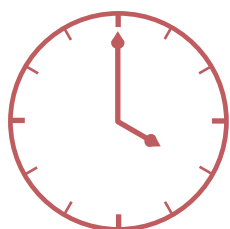
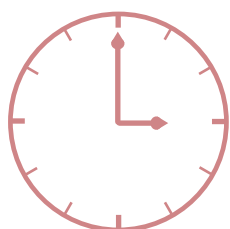
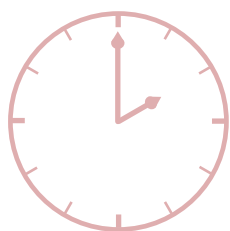
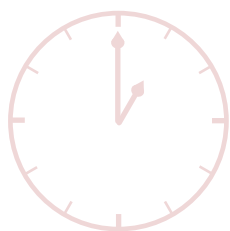
Manage Your Biological Clock

Our bodily functions are controlled by an inner biological clock. For most people that means that they get sleepy in the evening and they wake up in the morning. Shift workers, too, have a biological clock. The problem is that their work schedule prevents them from following it. That is why it is very important that they try to create conditions in which their body can function as naturally as possible.

We know that our body is oriented by light. Light means activity and alertness; its absence means rest and sleep (in the darkness our glands secrete melatonin - the hormone that induces sleep).

With a careful use of light we can create conditions that will fool our body into thinking that it is either day or night.

Shift-Work Report

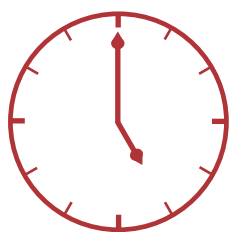
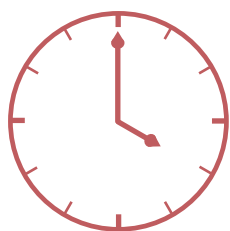
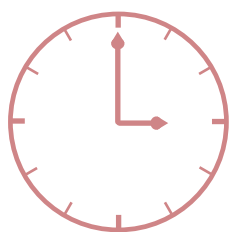
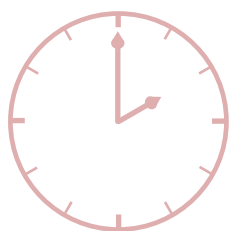
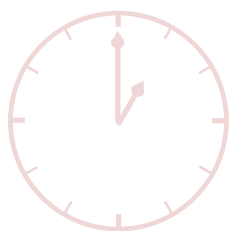


Bright light will wake us up. If you are working nights, you won't get any daylight. You can, however, buy a 'bright light device' that mimics the sun's light spectrum and intensity. These lights (you must buy one that has at least 2.500 luxes) will literally wake you up. You can expose yourself to such a light just before going to work. It would be even better, if you could work under these conditions. That way you would feel much more alert during the night shift.

When you go home from work, you have to avoid light as much as possible. You want to send a signal to your body that it is time to go to sleep. You can buy sunglasses that are especially designed for this purpose. These glasses block out the light and, as a consequence, the level of melatonin in your body increases. Because they are extremely dark, you are not allowed to drive a car while wearing them. If you, however, drive from work, use normal sunglasses. They will give you at least partial protection from sunlight.

When you come home, immediately darken your

Shift-Work Report



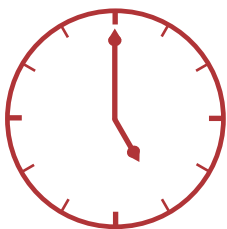
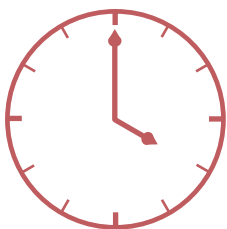
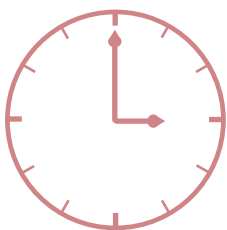
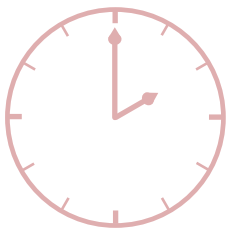
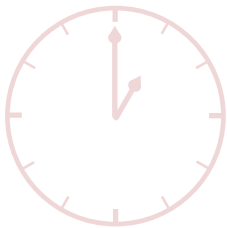
sleeping environment. It is even better to do that in the evening when you are getting ready to go to work – that way, when you come home, your bedroom is already dark. So, keep the bedroom door closed and use shades or blinds on the windows.

Besides light, there is another thing that is very important if you want your sleep to be undisturbed. That is the sound. To be more exact – the absence of sound. If you sleep during the day, noise can be a big problem. Because most people are active, the level of sound in our environment greatly increases (traffic, conversation, movement, telephone...).

You should try to eliminate disturbing sounds as much as possible. Use earplugs if you have to. The best ones are made from soft foam. You might not notice it consciously, but the sounds from your environment greatly affect the quality of your sleep. Turn off the doorbell and the phone.

You should also try to come to some sort of understanding with the people you live with. They should know your sleeping time in advance. During that period of day they shouldn't disturb you.

Shift-Work Report

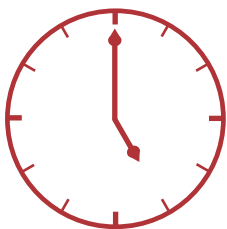
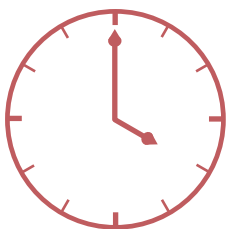
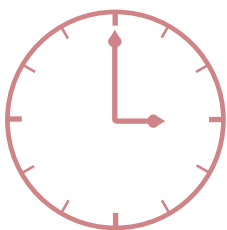
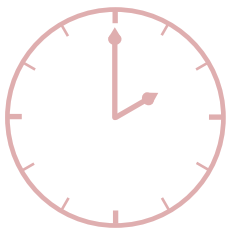
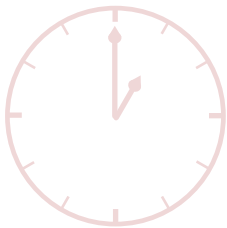


Alertness at Work

Shift working has a great effect on our biological clock. Even if you take all the necessary steps to ensure yourself the quality sleep, you might still have problems with sleepiness at work. There are a number of steps you can take in order to increase alertness on the job.

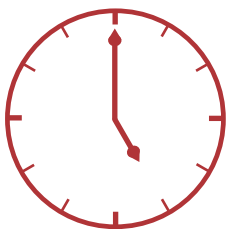
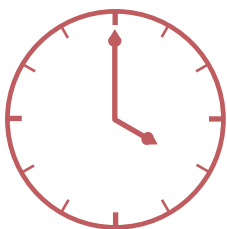
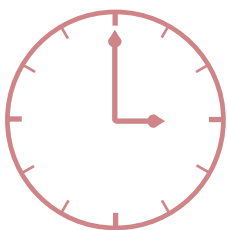
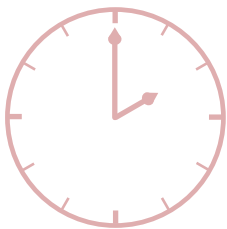
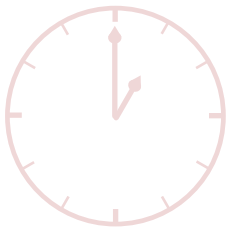
- Use bright light devices. You can get a portable hand-held bright light generator, which you can take to work.
- Take several short breaks.
- Complete the most demanding tasks at the beginning of your shift. After several hours of work it is more likely that you will suffer from drowsiness, which can lead to mistakes.
- If possible, take a short nap during breaks.

Shift-Work Report



- Try to work in pairs. Conversing with co-workers will help you stay alert.
- If you intend to go to sleep immediately after you finish working, do not consume any caffeine late in the shift. Never drink coffee on an empty stomach (a lot of shift workers suffer from stomach problems).
- Shift workers often have troubles finding the time for exercise. Try to exercise during breaks.
- Try to establish healthy eating habits. You can take some food from home (especially fruits, vegetables, and whole wheat bread). By doing that, you can eat healthy food that will help you keep away from the vending machines.
- Avoid drinking alcohol after work. It will disturb your sleep cycles. You will awake more often and have shorter periods of quality sleep.
- Ask your co-workers how they cope with the problems of shift work.

Shift-Work Report

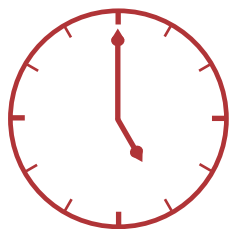
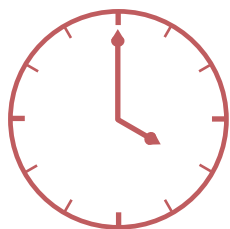
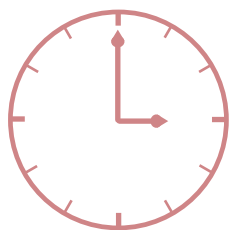
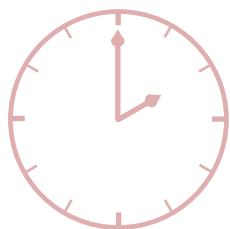


Get Home Safely

A lot of shift workers are very tired at the end of their shift. That is why driving home can sometimes prove dangerous. In order to get home safely, you should follow a few simple tips:

- If you feel very sleepy at the end of your shift, take a short nap. If you don't have other option, you can sleep in your car. Be careful to lock the doors and park in a safe area.
- If you start to feel drowsy during the drive home, stop and take a short nap.
- If you have that option, take a public transportation.
- Carpool. Make sure that whoever is the most alert is driving.
- Drive carefully. Even if you feel perfectly OK,

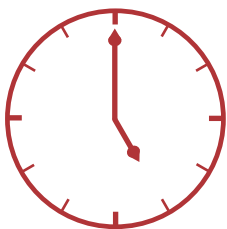
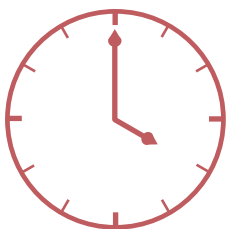
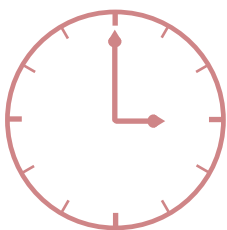
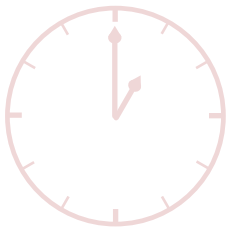
Shift-Work Report



your reflexes are probably not as good as usually.

- Don't drink alcohol before or during the drive.

Shift-Work Report



Conclusion

The Shift Work Report is focused primarily on the issue of shift work. That is why it mainly deals with its specific problems and consequences.

Besides the solutions presented in this report, there are also a number of other things you can do in order to eliminate tiredness. All of those are discussed in the End Tiredness Program.