

Sleeping in the Daytime

For sleep, one needs endless depths of blackness to sink into; daylight is too shallow, it will not cover one. ~ Anne Morrow Lindbergh



One pipeline controller said he goes home, eats a light breakfast, takes a shower, and then sleeps for nine hours in the daytime. He also does the same thing when he's working day shift. I think he is an unusual human being.

Do you sleep well in the daytime?

I would sleep about five hours after working a night shift, then start tossing and turning before giving up and getting up. And I slept less than five hours if there were noises: phones ringing, children playing, workers working, dogs barking, or other normal sounds of daytime life. I got by on that five hours, but I was usually fatigued and less alert on the night shift.

What keeps you awake in the daytime?

If a person works at night and cannot sleep eight hours in a row in the daytime, another idea is to nap an hour or two before going to work the next night.

What are your tips for sleeping in the daytime?

The "Sleep in America" poll states that the average American averages six hours, 55 minutes of sleep most nights. The Pacific Sleep Center reports that "the average sleep cycle for a night shift worker sleeping during the day is two to four hours shorter than that of a day worker sleeping at night. Day sleep is light, fragmented, and more likely to be disrupted. Sleep deprivation and insomnia can be severe in shift workers.

If one puts those two statements together, a night shift worker might be getting by on three to five hours of sleep in the daytime. The difficulty with those statements is that every person is different and some night shift workers may be sleeping seven or eight hours every day. It's best if you're able to do that.

Sleep is the only effective antidote to fatigue

But if you are working nights and only sleeping three to five hours between shifts, you are going to have to take some specific actions to be alert at work. These work for some people:

- Drink a cup of coffee or caffeinated soft drink
- Drink plenty of water
- Stand up, instead of sitting down and do not recline
- Walk around for five to ten minutes every couple of hours
- Keep the room cooler than you want it to be
- Work under bright lights
- Perform some light exercises and stretches
- Listen to upbeat music
- Have a lively conversation in person or on the phone

How do you stay alert on night shift?

The best practice is to sleep eight hours in the daytime, but many of us cannot do that. Sleeping in the daytime is against human nature. Night shift workers must sleep as much as possible, then do other actions to mitigate fatigue effects at work.