

# Fight fatigue risks

As our lives get ever busier, our sleep is often the first thing to go and we can quickly become fatigued. Being fatigued can have serious impacts on our health and safety, but some simple steps can help you get the rest you need.

## Don't sacrifice sleep

If you aren't getting the recommended seven to nine hours of sleep each day, consider these risks:

- When you miss out on sleep, it can affect more than just your productivity: fatigue can lead to decreases in cognitive performance, vigilance, accuracy and judgement, among many other effects
- Chronic sleep deprivation can cause a number of serious health risks, such as depression, obesity, cardiovascular disease and other illnesses<sup>1</sup>
- Losing small amounts of sleep over time can be detrimental. A person who sleeps six hours a night for two weeks performs similarly to someone who loses one full night of sleep.<sup>2</sup>
- Driving while fatigued can be similar to driving under the influence of alcohol. Driving on four to five hours of sleep means you are four times more likely to crash.<sup>3</sup>
- Up to 70 million Americans have a sleep disorder, which are major drivers of fatigue.<sup>4</sup> Left untreated, sleep disorders can contribute to decreased productivity, lead to higher rates of absenteeism and even exacerbate other health problems.
- A typical employer with 1,000 employees can expect to lose more than \$1 million each year to fatigue<sup>5</sup>
- Not sure if you're fatigued? Microsleeps and yawning are usually the only visible symptoms of fatigue, but hidden symptoms can include decreased vigilance, attention, memory and concentration.

## Fight fatigue

Many factors can keep you from getting the sleep you need, so focus on the issues you can control. To get your recommended hours – and make them as restful as possible – remember A.C.E.S.:

- A: Alcohol** – While drinking alcohol may make you feel drowsy it can actually interrupt your circadian rhythm and cause poor-quality sleep. It can also make you more prone to snoring and sleep apnea.
- C: Caffeine** – As a stimulant, consuming caffeine can disrupt your sleep patterns. Avoid it for as long as six hours before bedtime.
- E: Environment** – Keep your bedroom cool and dark. Consider blackout curtains and turning down the thermostat.
- S: Screens** – The blue light from TVs, phones, tablets and other electronic devices can keep your body from producing melatonin, the hormone that helps you relax and get to sleep. Avoid screens for at least 30 minutes before bed.

## References

- 1 According to: (Caruoso et. al, 2016; Perkins et. al, 2001; Frazier et. al, 2003; Rosekind et. al, 2010; Rajaratnam et. al, 2011)
- 2 According to: Van Dongen, H. P., Maislin, G., Mullington, J. M., & Dinges, D. (2003). The cumulative cost of additional wakefulness: dose-response effects on neurobehavioral functions and sleep physiology from chronic sleep restriction and total sleep deprivation. *Sleep*, 26(2), 117-126. <https://www.nsc.org/work-safety/safety-topics/fatigue/physiology-map>
- 3 Tefft, B.C. (2016). Acute Sleep Deprivation and Risk of Motor Vehicle Crash Involvement. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.
- 5 Sleep Disorders and Sleep Deprivation: An Unmet Public Health Problem. Washington, D.C.: Committee on Sleep Medicine Research Board on Health Sciences Policy. Institute of Medicine of the National Academies; The National Academies Press; 2006
- 6 According to the NSC Real Costs of Fatigue Calculator. <https://www.nsc.org/work-safety/safety-topics/fatigue/cost>

