

# FATIGUE AND WORK

Fatigue is the state of feeling very **tired, weary** or **sleepy** resulting from insufficient sleep, prolonged mental or physical work, shift work, or extended periods of stress or anxiety.

**Boring** or **repetitive** tasks can intensify feelings of fatigue.

repetitive  
repetitive  
repetitive



Staying awake for **24 hours** straight affects the human body almost exactly like a blood alcohol level of **.10%**, which exceeds Canada's legal limit for drivers.



## Impacts of fatigue

### DECREASED

- decision making ability
- ability to do complex planning
- communication skills
- productivity / performance
- attention and vigilance
- ability to handle job stress
- reaction time
- memory / ability to recall details

- tendency for risk-taking
- forgetfulness
- errors in judgement
- sick time and absenteeism
- medical costs
- accident rates

### INCREASED

Fatigue is regarded as having an impact on work performance. Most accidents occur when people are more likely to want sleep – between **midnight** and **6 am**, and between **1-3 pm**.<sup>[3]</sup>



## SIGNS



One shift worker in **five** dozes off during a shift.<sup>[1]</sup>



**Night, evening, rotating** and **irregular shifts** are associated with increased risk of occupational injury due to **worker fatigue, less supervision** and **reduced co-worker support**.<sup>[2]</sup>



## Fatigue is increased by...



dim lighting



limited visual acuity



high temperatures



high noise



high comfort



tasks over long periods of time



long, repetitive and monotonous tasks

## Tips for workers



**EAT** a healthy diet that promotes longer-lasting energy. Complex carbohydrates (starch) are preferable to simple carbohydrates (sugar). Avoid fatty foods and junk food.



**ADOPT** a steady exercise routine that includes cardiovascular, muscle strengthening and flexibility workouts.



**TRY** to get at least 7.5 - 8.5 hours of sleep per night.



**STAY** positive. Make a conscious effort not to be overwhelmed by negative circumstances.



**AVOID** driving if you are tired, especially in inclement weather where vision is impaired.



**AVOID** excessive noise.

## Advice for employers



**ENSURE** the work environment does not promote fatigue. Try to avoid dim lighting, toasty temperatures, and excessive noise.

**VARY** job tasks to eliminate repetition or long periods of boring, monotonous work.

**INCORPORATE** and encourage taking breaks.

**TRAIN** workers on the importance of getting enough rest and how to achieve work-life balance.

**INTRODUCE** shorter shifts, and rotate shifts in the direction of the sun (morning, afternoon, night, in that order).

[1] <http://www.ccohs.ca/newsletters/rsreport/issues/2007/11/ezone.html>

[2] <http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/shiftwork.html>

[3] Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Fatigue, Extended Work Hours, and Safety in the Workplace in Workplace Health and Safety, June 2004, Reformatted August 2010

**Items to emphasize:**

1. Fatigue has been known to impact work performance.
2. An issue often raised is the effect of fatigue on workplace incident and injury rates. The concern is that increased fatigue will contribute to incidents.

Government of Alberta, Labour reports that fatigue affects people differently, but it can increase a worker's hazard exposure by:

- reducing mental and physical functioning,
- impairing judgement and concentration,
- lowering motivation,
- slowing reaction time, and
- increasing risk-taking behaviour.