

# SleepCaptions

## Shiftwork Sleep Disorder

**Shift Work Sleep Disorder:** a Circadian Rhythm disorder resulting from a work schedule that takes place during the normal sleep time. It affects people who work at least some part of the night or who frequently rotate shifts. Their bodies never really adjust to displacing sleep to another part of the day.

## Features

A shift worker is anyone who follows a work schedule that falls outside of the traditional nine to five daytime schedule. Many fields commonly involve shift work, including:

- > medicine (doctors, nurses, technicians)
- > law enforcement or security
- > travel (pilots, air traffic controllers, taxicab drivers)
- > firefighters
- > Industry (commercial truck drivers)

It is easy to understand why shift work has become popular. By dividing the day into three shifts, the resulting 24 hour work force increases production. However, the benefits of perpetual productivity carry with it inherent risks. Compared to traditional workers, shift workers experience more sleep disturbance, resulting in less sleep over time. Frequent sleep disturbance leads to daytime sleepiness. Sleepiness in the work place precipitates poor job performance, errors, accidents, and injuries.

Shift Work Sleep Disorder develops when a person fails to adapt to a shift work schedule, even after a period of adjustment. The problem is that the shift work schedule demands wakefulness when the body wants to sleep. The only time remaining for sleep is when the body expects to be awake. Consequently, the person feels extremely tired on the job, yet unable to rest soundly when not working.

People who work overnight or early morning shifts often report the most sleep

problems. They feel unrefreshed after sleeping. They also sleep up to four hours less than average.

## Diagnosis

A two week record of your sleep patterns using a sleep diary is often enough to diagnose this condition. The log should reflect: bedtime, the time it takes to fall asleep, the number and duration of awakenings during the night, and the time you arise from sleep. Completing an Epworth Sleepiness Scale to rate the quality of your sleep will further demonstrate how sleep affects your life heart rate, breathing, and muscular activity during sleep.

Testing in a sleep laboratory may be necessary if another sleep disorder is suspected. In that case, each of two tests may be performed: an overnight sleep test called Polysomnography followed by a similar daytime test called the Multiple Sleep Latency Test (MSLT).

## Treatment

Treating Shift Work Sleep Disorder involves resetting your internal clock. Some employers offer techniques to help employees adapt to shift work. Ideally, the employer should offer:

- > limited use of rotating shifts
- > the opportunity for rotating shift workers to shift forward in time instead of backward
- > the use of Bright Lights in the work place
- > exercise breaks
- > regular rest breaks

Good Sleep Hygiene and Bright Light Therapy may also help.



## Do I Have Shiftwork Sleep Disorder?

I have trouble sleeping when I'm scheduled to sleep.

I feel tired at work.

I feel tired during other times when I am supposed to be awake.

My sleep problems began when I started working during my normal sleep time.

I have had these problems for at least a month.

This problem affects my job performance, social life, and family relationships.

## Shiftwork Sleep Disorder Mechanics

Shift Work Sleep Disorder is a Circadian Rhythm Disorder or one that affects the natural timing of sleep and wakefulness. Circadian rhythms involve an internal clock, which correlates to the 24 hour cycles of night and day on earth. This clock drives us to sleep at night, for about eight hours. It also drives us to feel awake during daylight hours, when sunlight is present. Sunlight keeps us awake, and darkness makes us tired.

We are so biologically driven to operate according to circadian rhythms that it is difficult to reset our internal clock.



## Need more information?

Visit the SleepMedicine Education web site at: [sleepmedicineeducation.com](http://sleepmedicineeducation.com) for additional publications. See also:

**SleepIssues:** "Out of Sync"

**SleepGuides:** "Treating Sleep Disorders"

To schedule an appointment at any Sleep Medicine Centers location, visit [www.sleepmedicinecenters.com](http://www.sleepmedicinecenters.com) or call:

(716)92-DREAM

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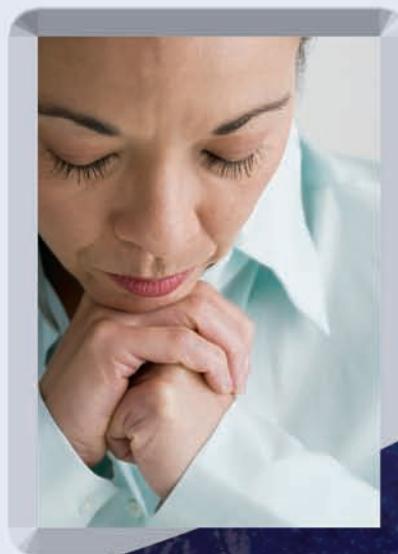
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## Risks for Shiftwork Disorder

- ✓ Any regular work that interferes with normal sleep times
- ✓ Rotating Shift
- ✓ Graveyard Shift
- ✓ Late Night Shift
- ✓ Increasing Age

## Effects of Shiftwork Disorder

- ✓ Increased sick leave
- ✓ Problems with social and family life
- ✓ Poor job performance
- ✓ Work-related errors
- ✓ Worked-related accidents
- ✓ Traffic accidents



## Did You Know?

The Monthly Labor Review reported in 2000 that 20% of the workforce or 15 million Americans are shift workers.

Compared to their day shift counterparts, shift workers are more likely to suffer from insomnia and excessive daytime sleepiness (61% vs. 47% and 30% vs. 18% respectively), according to the National Sleep Foundation 2005 Sleep In America poll.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine reports that 2-5% of the general population suffers from Shift Work Sleep Disorder, not including those who work an early morning shift.