



Sleeping well – a health requirement

By Nathan Deans, research & design manager (BAC)

If you work in a typical industrial factory or manufacturing facility there is a good chance that either you or the person next to you is feeling tired and drowsy during their normal work shift.

Figures collected by BAC from one of our clients operating industrial facilities have revealed that 42% of the workforce reported feeling tired at work. The facilities involved do not operate regular night shifts during normal operations so the traditional 'Shift Work' issues simply don't apply in this instance.

Additionally, 20% of the workforce reported that they are consistently 'waking but not feeling rested' while a further 26% reported that their sleep was 'regularly disturbed'.

The Australian Medical Association recommends that the average adult requires roughly 8hrs sleep per night. Falling short of this recommended figure places individuals in what is termed a 'Sleep Debt' which can have dramatic affects on work performance during the following day's work shift.

Sleep debt is the accumulation of lost hours of sleep compared to sleep you should have had. Essentially the larger the sleep debt you carry into the following workday, the greater the tendency to fall asleep during the work shift. As you can see this is a serious issue, as the potential for a fatigue related incident is very high.

Fatigue is defined as the loss of alertness and the capacity to perform work tasks safely that results from insufficient or poor quality sleep, working at times you would normally be asleep or engaging in mentally or physically demanding activities.

The Australian Medical Association equates the affects of fatigue with the affects of alcohol consumption on impaired physical and mental performance and suggests that being in an awakened state for more than 18.5 hours continuously is the equivalent of having a blood alcohol level of 0.05%, considered legally drunk in Australia.

So consider this; most responsible adults don't turn up for work drunk, but don't give a second thought to turning up to work tired or drowsy after a bad night's sleep, even though there is similar potential for impaired work performance.

Tips for a Good Night's Sleep

- Be sure to get plenty of sleep to allow your

body to recuperate and repair.

- Sleep on a firm mattress, preferably one which is neither too hard nor too soft, but just firm enough to hold your body while at the same time soft enough so that your shoulders, buttocks etc. depress into the mattress.
- Do not sleep sitting in a chair or in cramped quarters. Lie down in bed when it is time to sleep.
- Do not read or watch TV in bed, particularly with your head propped up or on a strained angle.
- Avoid late night snacks etc., especially items containing stimulants like caffeine and sugars.
- Get plenty of physical activity or exercise during the day to ensure that the body is in need of rest during the night.
- Sleep on your back or on your side with your legs flexed slightly, not drawn up tightly.
- Avoid sleeping on your stomach.
- Raise your head off the pillow when changing position.
- Rise from your bed by turning on your side and swinging your legs off the bed, then push yourself up into a sitting position using your arms, thus minimising the strain on your back.
- Your pillow should neither be too high or too low. The ideal pillow is one that supports your head so that your neck vertebrae will be level with the rest of your spine.
- Avoid sleeping on two pillows.
- NEVER lie on a couch with your head on the armrest.

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