

# Recommendations for Managing Fatigue



*This document has been reviewed by Actsafe's Motion Picture Standing Committee and approved for distribution to British Columbia's motion picture and television industry. For more information on occupational health and safety in the industry please visit [www.actsafe.ca](http://www.actsafe.ca).*

Humans are a day-oriented species and when we challenge that by working late into the night, there can be consequences.

The following recommendations will help you overcome those challenges and by doing so;

- Increase your personal health and safety
- Improve your family and social life
- Improve work performance
- Decrease your risk for injuries and ill health
- Decrease your risk for errors

## Improving Quality of Sleep

In the motion picture industry you'll be working into the night. It's important that, when you get the opportunity to sleep, you maximize it and learn how to deal with the challenge of sleeping during the day. For example, exposure even to low level lighting can substantially affect our body rhythms and subsequent ability to sleep.

1. Minimize your exposure to light during night work until after 5 am. On dayshift, crank up the lights or open the blinds for as much natural light as possible
2. Allow sunlight to help get you home safely after the night shift (avoid wearing sunglasses if possible)
3. Sleep as soon as you get home from night work; the longer you wait, the more your body temperature rises, telling you to wake up
4. Ensure your sleep environment is as dark as possible using things such as black-out curtains or an eye mask; for quality sleep any light while sleeping is bad light
5. Get comfortable – invest in a good quality mattress. If you're sharing a bed, ensure your mattress also minimizes motion transfer
6. Use bedding appropriate to the season to help moderate body temperature
7. Research shows that the optimal room temperature for the best sleep quality is between 18 - 20° C
8. Ensure good air circulation
9. On extremely hot days try sleeping in the basement or anywhere it is quieter, cooler, and darker than your regular bedroom

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10. Associate your bedroom with sleep and positive emotions, not wakefulness, worry, trauma or study
11. Incorporate a regular pre-sleep routine such as a warm bath, reading a book, meditation, etc.
12. To improve sleeping during daylight hours, invest in a "sun" alarm that has a sundown feature, which tricks your body into sleepiness by slowly reducing its light intensity to black
13. Keep the TV out of the bedroom – the exposure to blue light and noise can delay or prevent you from reaching deep sleep levels
14. Try to keep any personal electronic devices out of the bedroom, or reduce exposure to blue light by using a night light app (check your phone settings for a blue light filter)
15. Block out noise - wear ear-plugs, turn off your cell phone, turn off the doorbell, etc.
16. Install a white noise device such as a fan to mask other outside sounds
17. Spread the word to not disturb, especially in the first four hours of your sleep period unless it is an emergency!
18. Share your schedule with family and friends
19. Feet have the poorest circulation and there is evidence that wearing socks to bed reduces night waking episodes and helps you fall asleep faster
20. Avoid sleep medications; they are highly addictive and prevent you from getting a deep recuperative sleep
21. Avoid alcohol hours before bedtime; it keeps you from reaching the deep recuperative sleep levels you need.
22. Turn your alarm clock away from you so you don't stress out over how much sleep you're not getting
23. Before going to sleep, write down your thoughts to help clear your mind of anything lingering or troubling which may be keeping you awake.
24. If you regularly snore, consult your doctor or a sleep clinic that can screen you for sleep apnea or other sleep disorders
25. Maintaining a healthy body weight can reduce your susceptibility to snoring
26. Avoid sleeping on your back; try to sleep on your side
27. Avoid using alcohol and tranquilizers as sleep aids

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## The Rules of Napping

Napping is an effective way to augment sleep periods and can provide an alertness boost for several hours, but only if certain rules are followed.

28. Short naps should be limited to 30-40 minutes to avoid falling into a deep sleep and waking up in a groggy state which could make you feel worse than before the nap
29. Longer naps should be at least 2 hours to completely get through one cycle of sleep and back up to the lighter levels for easy waking
30. Avoid random naps, especially during night work, as they can upset your circadian rhythms; stick to regularly planned naps whenever possible. Our rhythms synchronize when we have consistency and routine in our sleep habits including when we nap

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## Alertness Strategies

Alertness strategies are important for ensuring safety and the prevention of injuries to yourself and others. The following tips will help you stay alert and focused when your body is telling you otherwise.

31. Take a short nap just before work to boost your alertness
32. After a nap, let the sunlight in by opening the curtains or raising the blinds
33. If it's dark outside and you're getting up after 5 am, switch on bright lights; otherwise, keep the lights low to ensure you have passed your body temperature minimum
34. Use a "sun" alarm or bedside timer that turns on your lamp minutes before your alarm goes off
35. Turn up the noise - music or TV
36. Turn down the heat - have a warm or even slightly cool shower to wake you up

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## When Feeling Drowsy at Work

37. Muscular activity arouses a sleepy mind by increasing circulation, so get active during breaks; stand up and perform a few simple stretches to put your body back in balance
38. Don't eat your meals at your workstation; go for a walk to increase blood flow to the muscles and more importantly, the brain
39. Alternate your posture at work every half-hour, especially if you have a sedentary job
40. Take advantage of any fitness equipment on-site
41. Engage in conversations to stimulate your brain
42. Turn on talk radio or lively music to increase alertness
43. Try a cup of peppermint tea; along with citrus scents like lemon and grapefruit, their strong aromas are stimulating to the brain; eucalyptus and pine are also invigorating, but avoid lavender, jasmine or chamomile which can act like sedatives

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## Alertness Behind the Wheel

A safe drive home begins before getting behind the wheel. For example, if you only had four hours of sleep yesterday, an alarm should go off in your head warning you that you're at higher risk than usual for a vehicle accident.

44. Get enough sleep during off-duty hours; use regular naps to supplement if you are frequently short-changed
45. If you're feeling sleepy, park and take a nap at a road stop or safe place away from traffic
46. On longer trips, take a break outside of the vehicle every two hours to recharge and stimulate blood flow to the brain
47. Exercise briefly before you get in your vehicle
48. Consider taking a taxi for shorter trips when you're tired
49. Carpool for longer trips so drivers can switch off; conversation will also prevent you from drifting off
50. Do not allow the vehicle's interior to be too warm; let in plenty of fresh air
51. Be aware of your alertness downtimes (early afternoon and between midnight and dawn) and drive defensively; you're not the only tired shift worker on the road
52. Totally avoid alcohol which enhances drowsiness levels

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## Family and Social Scheduling

It is not unusual for both spouses to initially feel guilty over the resentment of work interfering in family life. Often, the resentment is turned towards each other.

53. Communication is key – discuss your schedule and how it affects your family and friends; spend time explaining it to your children so they understand why your time is different from other kid's parents
54. Publish your schedule for family and friends to refer to – hang a time clock on your door, mark your shift on calendars and distribute; let the kids plan things to do when you have days off
55. Plan quality personal time – all relationships need nourishing; try to spend time with each family member each day; if necessary, talk on the phone, text, use email, use post-its, send postcards, etc.
56. If you have time off during daytime hours, spend time at your children's school as a volunteer, or have lunch with them in the playground
57. Try to have at least one meal together with family each day – your breakfast may be their supper, but work it in even if you eat different foods
58. Discuss family security issues - check-in phone calls, arrangements with neighbours, and security systems can all help to reduce needless worry and anxiety
59. Don't completely miss out on life's special moments such as the first ball game or the dance recital; have family record events you have to miss
60. Develop friendships with people on similar schedules so you can do things as a group at unusual times - single people especially; go to matinees, join teams, take classes
61. If you have to miss a birthday, celebrate it again when you can – young kids will like being able to celebrate twice!
62. A recovery day that involves low key activities to enhance recovery and catch-up sleep should be scheduled after a series of long nights, or whenever struggling with fatigue; it should not involve home renovations, major housekeeping or yard work, all-day sports tournaments, etc.

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## Eating at Night

Food acts like a drug, altering the balance of chemicals in the brain. Mood, energy levels, alertness and performance can all be manipulated through diet so it's important to know what to eat and when to eat it.

63. Digestion slows down during the night, allowing more time for the liver to break down our food and increasing the storage of fat; cut back on eating after midnight to avoid weight gain
64. Proteins are alertness foods and should be the main staple when working evening or night hours; good examples include fish, lean meats, skinless chicken, tofu, nuts, eggs and cheese
65. Eat high-protein to get you through sluggish periods e.g. protein bars, yogurt, a handful of nuts are all good choices
66. Carbohydrates such as pasta, rice, bread and potatoes are calming foods that promote drowsiness and should be avoided before and during night shift
67. Avoid high fat foods which further slow down the digestive process, as well as inducing drowsiness, bloating, and increased absorption of fat into storage cells
68. Avoid eating negative comfort foods (potato chips, ice cream, candy, cookies); save them as a treat for daytime hours when your body can better digest them
69. Avoid sugary snacks which provide a quick boost of alertness but which then drag you down into a more fatigued state than before you took the snack
70. Avoid salty snacks which can increase dehydration and fatigue
71. Avoid spicy and acidic foods at night (tomatoes, orange juice, garlic, onions, etc.) as digestion is impaired and the stomach offers less protection to its lining
72. Limit caffeine, especially four hours before going to bed so it doesn't interfere with your sleep
73. Our bodies respond better to routine, so try to eat at the same times
74. Drink plenty of water early on when working night time hours; good hydration combats fatigue and keeps the organs functioning better under stress
75. Reduce liquids as you get closer to going home after night work, to avoid a bathroom call when you're trying to sleep

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## Strategies to Prevent Stomach Upset

Indigestion, heartburn and ulcers are often associated with shift work, and may result in not getting enough sleep, but they don't have to be. By watching what you eat and when you eat it, you can prevent digestive problems and interrupted sleep.

76. Quit smoking to prevent excessive air being drawn into the GI tract
77. Eat and drink slowly
78. Limit gas-producing and spicy foods
79. Limit fermenting products (e.g. alcohol)
80. Limit caffeine intake to no more than the equivalent of 3-4 cups coffee per day (1 Grande Starbuck or large Tim Hortons = 2 cups)
81. Elevate your sleeping posture with a pillow under your shoulders to reduce acid reflux from bubbling up

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## Fitness

People who work varied schedules often have to be creative when trying to fit in fitness.

82. Look for 24-hour gym facilities
83. Regular aerobic exercise stabilizes circadian rhythms and burns off excess energy; aerobically fit individuals also achieve better quality of sleep
84. Light to moderate exercise just prior to beginning a later shift will boost energy and improve concentration
85. When working daylight hours, limit intensive exercise 2-3 hours before sleep; light to moderate exercise an hour or two before sleep is a proven sleep stabilizer – try going for a walk

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## Relaxation/Stress Reduction

Lack of sleep combined with lack of understanding or support at home can create intense feelings of stress. Workers with varied schedules need to find effective coping strategies to prevent the fallout on their health and relationships.

86. Practice deep breathing and/or yoga; getting oxygen into our lungs dissipates stress as well as fatigue
87. Invest in a massage to remove the tension residing in the muscles and stimulate circulation
88. Learn to laugh at yourself and what is out of your control; it may be the difference between coping and having a nervous breakdown
89. Use progressive muscle relaxation by contracting one group of muscles at a time, holding for ten seconds, then relax

Not all of these survival techniques will work for you, but some will, and if you still need help, here's a bonus tip;

90. Talk to your friends and colleagues to find out what works for them