

“A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book”

- Irish Proverb

In this month's newsletter:

Sleep and workplace productivity

Fact & Tip of the month



Sleep and workplace productivity

Looking to boost your productivity in the workplace?

It's time to look beyond to-do lists and endless cups of coffee and visit a common root cause of unproductivity. Lack of sleep – or lack of quality sleep.

Sleep and quality job performance go hand in hand and when you get sufficient sleep, your health, wellbeing and work all improve.

The benefits of getting enough sleep

Sleep helps to improve your mental health, mood and brain function. When both the quantity and quality of sleep required is met, you awake feeling refreshed and energised. During sleep, your brain creates pathways that are critical for memory formation and retention. These processes help enhance learning and problem-solving skills, which are essential for top performance in the workplace.

What is sleep deprivation?

Sleep deprivation, put simply, is the result of not getting enough sleep. **It is recommended that adults get between 7 and 9 hours of sleep every night.**

However, a [YouGov](#) survey found that only half (51%) of UK adults met these guidelines within the last year, and almost 1 in 5 (18%) were sleeping for less than 6 hours each night.

Sleep deprivation can happen to anyone but it is more common among workers with multiple jobs or long shifts. Shift workers may also struggle because their routines don't align with their **circadian rhythm (natural sleep-wake cycles)**. In some cases, people who feel sleep deprived regularly may have untreated anxiety or a sleep disorder and should consider consulting with their GP.

The symptoms of sleep deprivation vary but if this is something you are experiencing, you likely do not feel refreshed when you wake up in the morning, may find yourself falling asleep in a meeting without intending to and may experience changes in your mood and abilities to complete tasks.

How does sleep affect the workplace?

Losing just an hour or two of sleep for a few nights significantly impairs your ability to function. As well as feeling tired, you may feel irritable or struggle to think clearly or form memories.

In fact, a lack of sleep leads to a lack of cognitive function. With reduced intellectual ability, you are less alert and slower to respond, which can affect your job performance and potentially put yourself and your co-workers at risk depending on your type of role.

A lack of sleep can lead to accidents or injuries both in the workplace and while commuting with a [2020 study](#) finding that 38% of workers have had an accident or near miss commuting because of drowsiness.

You may also find that you struggle to make decisions and may be more likely to make mistakes while working.





Improve your sleep

The first thing you need to consider when trying to improve your sleep is your sleep hygiene. And no, we don't mean how fresh your bed sheets are but how optimal your sleep environment, habits and behaviours are.

Waking up and going to bed at the same time each day helps your body settle into a consistent rhythm for sleep. Daily exercise or outdoor activity also helps you to sleep – however it can have the opposite effect if done too close to bedtime.

Develop a bedtime routine

How you spend the one to two hours leading up to your bedtime is paramount in ensuring that you get both quantity and quality sleep.

Nicotine and caffeine are both stimulants that can impact your ability to fall asleep, while heavy meals and alcohol can disrupt your sleep. Artificial light from electronics stimulates the brain and keep you awake for longer.

Instead, try a quiet and relaxing activity such as a warm bath, meditation or reading. And if you're in need of a pre-sleep drink or snack, consider chamomile tea or a decaffeinated, sugar free hot drink alternative. And lighter foods such as almonds, lean meats or fruits including kiwis will help to keep hunger at bay until the morning.

Create a good sleep environment

No one finds it easy to fall asleep in a bright, hot, and noisy room. So, ensuring that your bedroom is the exact opposite of this will ensure a good night's sleep.

Light can make sleeping difficult so blackout blinds or curtains are a must. But if these aren't an option for you, try a sleeping mask instead.

Earplugs can block out excess noise if you live in a busy area and a fan or white noise machine can cover up unwanted sounds.

Lastly, your body temperature decreases as you sleep. So find a temperature for your room that doesn't make you wake up feeling too hot or cold – happy sleeping!

FACT: humans spend 1/3 of their life sleeping



TIP: If you've spent around 20 minutes in bed without being able to fall asleep, get out of bed and do something relaxing in low light to avoid a connection in your mind between your bed and frustration from sleeplessness