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Sleep Fatigue

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Many people struggle with not only getting enough sleep, but getting quality sleep. Between work life and family life, it seems there is not enough time in a day to accomplish all that needs to be done.

Getting a good night's sleep is key to maintaining both physical and cognitive health. Our bodies know this instinctively and researchers have proved many times that this is true.

According to Medical News Today, studies have shown that sleep protects vascular health, maintains brain health, and may give the immune system a boost. While conversely, poor sleep may lead to cardiovascular disease, contribute to depression, and increase a person's risk of diabetes.

Some researchers have warned that sleep loss can affect aspects of memory and visual perception so severely that driving after a sleepless night can be as dangerous as drunk driving.

We often make light of how little sleep we get on a regular basis. An over-worked, over-tired condition has become the norm for many of us, but a good night's sleep is not just a novelty, it's a necessity. The effects of fatigue are far-reaching and can have an adverse impact on all areas of our lives.

Fatigue is more than just being tired. It can make us a danger to ourselves and others at home, work, or on the road.

Feelings of fatigue are somewhat subjective, and signs of fatigue are not always easy to identify. Some people might not realize they are fatigued.

Here are some signs/symptoms of fatigue to look for:

- Chronic tiredness or sleepiness
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Sore or aching muscles
- Muscle weakness
- Slowed reflexes and responses
- Impaired decision-making and judgement
- Moodiness, such as irritability

Work often requires us to override natural sleep patterns. The National Safety Council states that 43 percent of workers are sleep-deprived, and those most at risk work night shifts, rotating shifts, long shifts, or irregular shifts. When employees

are fatigued safety performance decreases as well.

Drowsy driving is impaired driving. While we wouldn't allow a friend to drive drunk, we rarely take the keys away from our tired friends or insist that they take a nap before heading out on the road.

What can be done to prevent fatigue?

- Get enough sleep and provide for adequate rest between physically or cognitively demanding activities.
- Talk to a doctor about getting screened for sleeping disorders.
- Align your natural body clock with your work schedule.
- If you work night shift or rotating shifts try to maintain a consistent sleep schedule even on your days off.

Sleep is a vital factor for overall health. It is said that adults need an average of seven to nine hours of sleep each night. If you are already doing this keep up the great work. If you are not able to accomplish this see what can be adjusted in your busy schedule to allow for more sleep time.

Remember fatigue is more than just being tired and it can greatly affect your health and safety as well as the safety of those around you.

Sources: National Safety Council (Fatigue – You're More Than Just Tired); (What You Can do to Prevent Fatigue)

Medical News Today: (Sleep deprivation 'triples the number of lapses in attention')

