



SLEEP GUIDE FOR SHIFT WORKERS

Tips for sleep, recovery and staying energised on morning, evening and night shifts

A good night's sleep helps you stay energised even when you are working different shifts.

Every fourth Finn does shift work. Shift work challenges the natural circadian rhythm of the body and poses a risk of insomnia, sleep deprivation and poor recovery. Sleep deprivation impacts concentration and decision-making and increases the risk of injury, especially on night shifts.

Shift work does not suit everyone, and it is increasingly taxing on the body with age. Nevertheless, shift workers can still be healthy and happy as long as they maintain a clear rhythm and actively support their recovery and well-being. This guide gives tips for making your morning, evening and night shifts easier.

Morning shift

Early mornings are stressful on the body, so preparation for the day should start in the previous evening.

Before the morning shift

- **Accustom your body to wake up early.**
On the previous day, get up around the time you would for a morning shift.
- **Go to bed early enough.**
A short night's sleep is taxing on the body.
- **Light exercise is relaxing.**
Avoid intense exercise the night before, because it can make falling asleep more difficult.
- **Make your morning easier.**
Get your clothes and coffee maker ready the night before. If you have no appetite in the morning, eat breakfast at the workplace.

During the morning shift

- **Eat at regular intervals.**
Eating lunch at the same time everyday supports the sleep-wake rhythm.
- **Eat a light lunch.**
Heavy food can make you tired, whereas a light and nutritious meal keeps you energised for the rest of the day.

After the morning shift

- **Take short naps.**
A short (10—20 min) nap can be refreshing. See if a nap suits your body and rhythm.
- **Make the most out of caffeine.**
A small cup of coffee before a nap gives you renewed energy. However, caffeine can disrupt your sleep so you should avoid caffeine 8—10 hours before going to bed.

Evening shift

An evening shift postpones recovery, so having a clear daily rhythm helps you fall asleep after work.

Before the evening shift

- **Get some daylight.**
Spend the morning outside or exercise lightly — this keeps you energised and supports your circadian rhythm.
- **Eat before the evening shift.**
A light and well-balanced meal before work keeps your energy up.

During the evening shift

- **Eat light.**
Eat an evening snack during the shift.
- **Take breaks and move around.**
Especially in stationary work, your alertness can drop easily. Movement can help.
- **Know your rhythm.**
For early risers, evening shifts can be particularly taxing. Listen to your body and take active breaks when necessary.

After the evening shift

- **Allow yourself to relax.**
A relaxation or breathing exercise before bed can help you fall asleep.
- **Avoid stimulants.**
Sugary snacks and soft drinks can make falling asleep difficult and disrupt your sleep.
- **A late dinner could work.**
If you are hungry in the evening, you can eat a second main meal of the day in the evening as long as it is light and easily digestible.



Night shift

Night shifts are the most taxing on the body and difficult for most people. Good preparation and recovery help you stay energised and prevent sleep deprivation.

Before a night shift

- **Prepare to stay awake.**
In the evening on the day before the night shift, stay up longer than usual and sleep in in the morning.
- **Take a nap before the night shift.**
A 20—90-minute nap is enough to keep up your energy in the early hours.

During the night shift

- **Eat light and in time.**
Eat a light meal at the start of your shift. Digestion slows down at night, so avoid heavy meals.
- **Consume caffeine cautiously.**
Caffeinated drinks affect the body for many hours. Avoid caffeine after midnight to ensure a good sleep after the shift.

- **Stay alert.**
Bright lights, a glass of cold water or fresh air can pick you up momentarily.
- **Take breaks and move around.**
Move around between 3 and 5 a.m. when your alertness is at its lowest.

After the night shift

- **Avoid sunlight.**
Wear sunglasses on your way home to stop the light from waking you up.
- **Eat a light meal containing carbohydrates before sleep.**
- **Maintain a good sleep routine.**
Sleep in your bed, not on the sofa. Repeat your night-time routine normally before bed.



Sleep rhythm during night shifts

1 night shift:

Go to bed immediately after work but avoid afternoon naps. In the evening, go to sleep as you would on a normal night — maintain a night-time routine and try to relax before sleep.

- 2—3 night shifts in a row:

Go to bed immediately after work and take a short nap before the next shift. A 20—90-minute nap is enough to keep up your energy in the early hours. After the last night shift, try to return to your normal sleep rhythm by sleeping only for 2—3 hours in the morning. Then, stay awake for the day and go to bed at a normal time.

Multiple night shifts:

Try to sleep 4—5 hours in the morning and take a nap in the evening before work. Some people get energised by sleeping longer before a night shift.

After the last night shift:

Do not avoid the sun but expose yourself to light! Sleep only 2—3 hours in the morning to help you restore your regular sleep rhythm. Stay awake for the day and go to sleep at the usual time in the evening — just like after a day shift.

The need for sleep and the benefits of napping can vary. If you are tired, it is better to sleep than force yourself to stay awake.

Remember: sleep is your most important tool

Shift work requires planning, flexibility and a clear routine. Sometimes, sleep avoids you and you must reserve more time to fall asleep.

- Make sleep part of your daily routine.

Plan your days around recovery.

- Create a peaceful sleeping environment.

The home environment is not always quiet and peaceful. Discuss the matter with your family and find solutions together.

- Listen to your body.

If you are constantly tired or suffer from sleep deprivation, do not hesitate to get help.



Do you need help with sleep and recovery?

Pihlajalinna Occupational Health helps you identify and recover from sleep disorders. For example, Pihlajalinna's sleep training and sleep disorder examinations can help you restore your sleep quality and keep you energised every day.

Do not hesitate to discuss your sleep-related problems with occupational health.

Expert Veera Lange, Sleep Coach, Expert CBT-I Insomnia Therapist

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