

Sleep Advice for all Shiftworkers

Doctors, Nurses,
Firemen, Factory
Workers, Hotel
Workers + more...



Better Bedding
sleep experts



Meet Dr Megan (She works shifts, so we will use her to explain things:)

Dr. Megan has no problems with falling asleep or waking in the night. However, noise and light wake her up before she wants to. She often feels like she hasn't had enough sleep. She works for six days and then has four days off, her hours varying throughout. She drinks caffeine close to bedtime. Though she sleeps relatively well, Dr. Megan often feels lethargic and irritable.

Restful Environment

Dr. Megan should check her mattress to ensure it is supporting her properly. As she often sleeps during the day, she should make sure her décor isn't too bright, as this could have an impact. Blackout blinds may also help her, blocking out unwanted sunlight. Her bedroom temperature should be kept between 16 and 18 degrees Celsius, and she should try bedding made from natural materials, which help to maintain temperature.

Dr. Megan could benefit from a sunshine alarm clock and a portable light box, as well as ear-plugs. These tools will help to regulate her body clock and prevent her from being disturbed.

Routine

Dr. Megan has four different sleep times, so her routine should be informed by environmental cues rather than timings. She should not take caffeine at least six hours before sleep. Light should be used to keep her awake during her night shift. It is important she winds down properly before sleep, no matter what time she goes to bed. When she works a late or night shift, she could try a short nap around two hours before work, which will boost her energy levels. No matter what time she goes to bed, she should always try to sleep for the same amount of time.

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Relaxation

Before bed, Dr. Megan should refrain from playing games, working or watching engrossing television. She should try yoga and meditation, alongside a warm bath or shower. She could also use the “4-7-8 technique”, where she breathes in for four seconds, holds for seven, and then breathes out with a ‘whoosh’ for eight seconds.

In the hour before bed, she should make sure lights are kept low, with the curtains shut if it’s daytime. This will help her body’s natural melatonin production.

Sleep Programme

Dr. Megan has different sleep routines, as she works three different shifts and then has days off. We are therefore concentrating on creating a calm, restful environment and a consistent routine. She should aim for seven hours sleep every day, and avoid sleeping for longer on his days off. If he feels too tired, a nap for no more than 40 minutes will give him an energy boost.

Two hours before bed: Dr. Megan should not have a heavy meal after this time, and she should also avoid exercise. If she is driving home from work in daylight, but will be sleeping when she gets home, she can wear sunglasses; this will prevent the natural light from repressing his melatonin production.

One hour before bed – The Golden Hour: Dr. Megan should start her wind down routine, where she relaxes her body and gets ready for sleep. She should not do any work or spend time on the computer or blue screen devices. If she is hungry, she should have peanut butter on granary toast or oatcakes and cheese. Before going to bed, she could have a warm bath or a shower, which will advise her body to start producing melatonin. She can then practice the 4-7-8 breathing technique, as this will reduce her stress levels and help her to switch off.

Even if Dr. Megan feels tired enough to fall straight to sleep after work, she should always try and go through this process.

Bedtime: If Dr. Megan does not get to sleep within half an hour of going to bed, she should get up and start the process again. Tossing and turning will only lead to his stress levels rising.

Wake Up: Within half an hour to an hour of getting up, Dr. Megan should be having breakfast. She should wake using natural light, so a sunshine alarm clock would be a big help. If she feels sleepy during the day, she should use naps, but for no longer than 40 minutes. Caffeine should be avoided six hours before sleep time.

As with all sleep programmes, things may get worse before they get better. It may take Dr. Megan three to four weeks to settle into this routine.

If you want to monitor your own sleep patterns and habits then why not complete a sleep diary by downloading one our website at https://betterbedding.ie/sleep_diary.pdf.



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