

# FATIGUE, REST AND HOW YOU CAN STAY AFLOAT



Sure, we're all tired from time to time, but did you know that getting a good night's sleep is just as important as a healthy diet and exercise? In fact, fatigue is one of the main causes people have attributed to workplace accidents.

We know better than anyone that a good night's sleep can feel near impossible in the commercial seafood industry, so we've compiled a few tips and tricks to help you improve your rest.

## EVEN JUST A LITTLE.

### FACTS ON SLEEP

- People need 7-8 hours of sleep per night to stay healthy
- 15% of Australians have their sleep impacted by shift work
- Long-lasting fatigue can be a sign of depression
- Fatigue and a lack of rest can contribute to the development of mental illness

That feeling of being tired can impact all of us but knowing when being tired crosses the line to fatigue or chronic fatigue is important.

Fatigue and mental exhaustion can happen to anyone who experiences long-term stress. It can make you feel overwhelmed and emotionally drained, and make your responsibilities and problems seem impossible to manage or overcome.

### WHAT IS FATIGUE?

Fatigue is the general term used to describe the feeling of being tired, drained or exhausted. It is mental or physical exhaustion that stops a person from being able to function normally (Worksafe).

Studies suggest that psychological factors are present in at least 50 per cent of fatigue cases. These may include:

- **Depression** – this illness is characterised by severe and prolonged feelings of sadness, dejection and hopelessness. People who are depressed commonly experience chronic fatigue.
- **Anxiety and stress** – a person who is chronically anxious or stressed keeps their body in overdrive. The constant flooding of adrenaline exhausts the body, and fatigue sets in.
- **Grief** – losing a loved one causes a wide range of emotions including shock, guilt, depression, despair and loneliness.

Experts suggest that if you are experiencing the signs of fatigue you should go and see your GP. This isn't something you need to tackle alone.

Research has shown that people who work 17 hours straight have the equivalent of a blood alcohol reading of .05 and that people who've been awake for 24 hours have the equivalent of double the legal limit of .01. So, if you're driving or operating equipment after long shifts or with little sleep, you mightn't get a DUI, but you might be at risk of having a serious accident.

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## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF FATIGUE:

- poor judgment
- anxiety, irritability, depression & mood disturbances
- slower reactions times
- impaired hand-eye coordination
- decreased skills, such as in vehicle or machinery control
- reduced attention/motivation
- decreased short term memory
- increased risk-taking behaviour

## HOW TO MANAGE FATIGUE IN SHIFT WORK

- have a short sleep before you start your shift
- do some moderate exercise before starting work, which helps to increase your alertness during the shift
- have bright lighting
- if possible, vary your work at the times you feel most drowsy
- walk around during breaks
- keep in contact with co-workers as this helps you both stay mentally alert
- if possible, consider using public transport or taxis rather than driving, or share the driving responsibility with a co-worker
- when resting make the environment favourable for sleeping. Things like asking family or flatmates not to disturb you, turning off your mobile, or pulling the curtains over your window can help

 13 11 14  
lifeline.org.au

 1300 224 636  
beyondblue.org.au

## HOW TO SLEEP BETTER

- try to exercise each day – even if it's only for a short time
- reduce blue light during the evening – try putting down your phone earlier or switching it to night-mode
- cut back on stimulants like caffeine, alcohol and nicotine
- if possible, try to keep a routine bedtime and wake time
- leave a couple of hours after your last meal before going to sleep
- try a sleep app like 'Calm' – white noise, bedtime stories and soothing music if you find it hard to fall asleep
- drink a herbal tea like chamomile or peppermint an hour before bed
- consider a natural supplement. Your GP or pharmacy may be able to advise you (check with your GP first if you have any pre-existing conditions or are on other medication)
- still not working? It might be time to chat with your GP. You may have a condition that is related to your sleep loss and is perfectly treatable

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