

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Tips for hospital workers



Phoenix
AUSTRALIA

Fight COVID-19 with better sleep health: A guide for hospital workers

The health and safety of hospital workers is critical to mitigating the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19). One important component of good health is getting enough sleep. This tip sheet provides some helpful advice for hospital workers to ensure they get the sleep they need to maintain their health and be effective in their work.

Hospital workers often get less than the recommended 7–9 hours of sleep per night and may need to work varying shifts or around-the-clock hours. And with an increase in demand on our healthcare system, workers' schedules will be affected more.

Sleep and circadian disruption can have negative health and safety consequences including impaired immune function and increased accidents and errors.

Make sleep a priority

Sleep is a tool that you can utilise to help your body fight off infection, maintain health, and perform at its best, which will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of you and your patients.

As a hospital worker, you can take steps to ensure healthy sleep from the moment you wake up by following the guidelines below.

- When you wake up, get at least 15–60 minutes of bright light. Natural sunlight is best, but any bright or blue enriched light source (e.g., light box, bright indoor lights) is also suitable. Bright light is a signal to your biological clock that it's time to start the day.
- Exercise close to the time you wake up as this signals daytime and will help you to become alert for the day ahead. For the same reason, avoid exercise close to bedtime.
- If you're a shift worker and are unable to get your full sleep requirements in one block, it may help to take naps. Even short naps (<20 minutes) can improve alertness, performance, and memory. Longer naps (>60 minutes) can make up for lost sleep or prepare you for anticipated sleep loss by 'banking' some sleep in advance.
- Use caffeine judiciously. It can help keep you awake when tired, but those effects remain for hours and can interfere with your ability to fall sleep. So try not to consume caffeine within about 6 hours of your desired bedtime. Also, caffeine may become less effective if it is consumed too often, which means it won't be as useful at times when you really need it.
- Limit alcohol before bed. It may be sedating at first, but it disrupts your sleep quality.



- Keep a regular sleep and wake-time schedule as much as possible, even on your days off. This helps keep your sleep and circadian systems in sync and minimises a physiological 'jet-lag'.
- Create a regular bedtime routine of quiet activities, such as having a warm bath or shower, reading, brushing your teeth, and ending with a relaxation exercise, to get your mind and body ready for sleep.
- Limit stimulating activities or surroundings close to bedtime, especially bright lights, electronic screens, drinking caffeine, exercising or working.
- Keep your bedroom dark, cool, quiet and comfortable. Use an eye mask or black-out curtains, and turn off electronic screens to foster a night-time environment.

Source: Information provided by the Chronobiology, Light and Sleep Lab within the Department of Psychiatry at Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

For more COVID-19 related resources visit
www.phoenixaustralia.org/covid-19

*Adapted with permission from the Center for the Study
of Traumatic Stress, Uniformed Services University.*

Useful services and resources

Coronavirus Health Information Line
1800 020 080

Department of Health
www.health.gov.au

healthdirect hotline
1800 022 222