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How to fight fatigue as the days get shorter



Tips for workers and employers on staying alert at work
By The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Cold, dark mornings, darker afternoons and early evenings characterize the late autumn. Workers may think that feeling tired or rundown is a symptom of the season, but any number of other factors may be causing the fatigue they are experiencing.

Fatigue is the state of feeling very tired, weary or sleepy as a result of too little sleep, prolonged mental and physical work, or extended periods of stress or anxiety. Boring or repetitive tasks can intensify feelings of fatigue. Fatigue can impact work performance. Some studies have shown that when workers have slept for less than five hours before work or when workers have been awake for more than 16 hours, their chance of making a mistake at work due to fatigue is significantly increased.

Here are some tips for fighting fatigue:

For workers:

- Eat a healthy diet that promotes longer-lasting energy. Complex carbohydrates (green vegetables, beans, grains) are preferable to simple carbohydrates (sugars). Avoid fatty foods and junk food.
- Adopt a steady exercise routine that includes cardiovascular, muscle strengthening and flexibility workouts.
- Try to get at least 7.5 – 8.5 hours of sleep per night. Try to go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
- Stay positive. Make a conscious effort not to be overwhelmed by negative circumstances.
- Avoid driving if you are tired, especially in inclement weather when road conditions are hazardous, and visibility is limited.
- Avoid excessive noise.

For employers:

- Make sure the work environment does not promote fatigue. Try to avoid dim lighting, toasty warm temperatures and excessive noise.

- Vary job tasks to eliminate repetition or long periods of boring, monotonous work.
- Incorporate and encourage taking breaks.
- Train workers on the importance of getting enough rest and how to achieve work-life balance.
- Introduce shorter shifts, and rotate shifts in the direction of the sun (morning, afternoon, night, in that order).