



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 23: May 29th – June 2nd, 2023
Sleep Deprivation: Tiredness vs. Fatigue

How many hours of sleep are you getting each night? The amount of sleep you need varies with age and health, but 7-9 hours is recommended for healthy adults. However, most people do not come close to this many hours, leading to tiredness and fatigue throughout the day.

Sleep is necessary for your body and mind to recover so you can tackle each day at your full potential. Too little sleep puts you at risk for accidents and careless mistakes on the job and at home. This week we will discuss the adverse effects of fatigue and mitigating fatigue in the workplace, as well as identifying and managing it the second it hits.

Monday - Fatigue and Tiredness: What's the Difference?

When you hear the word fatigue, what do you think of? Tiredness? Sleepiness? Drowsiness? While these can all occur when you feel fatigued, there is a difference. Many times, fatigue can occur from a lack of sleep and too much work. Everyone experiences this, especially after a long day at work or a tough workout. This form of fatigue is typically treatable by adequate and quality sleep.

However, not all forms of fatigue are treatable with sleep. According to the Mayo Clinic, fatigue can present itself as “unrelenting exhaustion, a constant state of weariness, and a lack of motivation and concentration” [1].

If you find yourself experiencing fatigue and lack of energy that is not getting better from rest, speak with your doctor. Many times, prolonged physical fatigue is a sign of an underlying medical condition or dietary issue, and leaving it untreated can make matters worse.

Tuesday – Negative Effects of a Lack of Sleep

Many times, when you think about the effects of a lack of sleep, you probably imagine falling asleep at your desk, going about your day very tired, and trying to alleviate the drowsiness with large quantities of caffeine. What you may not think about are the vehicle or workplace accidents that commonly occur from sleep deprivation.

According to Science Daily, “**16% of all fatal car crashes** involve drowsy driving caused by a lack of sleep” [2]. As for workplace accidents, the National Sleep Foundations claims that the risk of an accident occurring to an employee on the job **increases by 70%** if that worker is sleep deprived [3]. These workplace and motor vehicle accidents are mitigated through getting enough sleep to be alert throughout the day, and not starting a risky task while sleep deprived.

Here are some tips from Sleep Education to help you avoid drowsy driving [4]:



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- **Get enough sleep the night before.** The most common cause of drowsy driving is sleep deprivation. Reduce the risk of an accident by making sure you're giving your body the sleep it needs, about 8 hours for adults.
- **If you feel tired, pull over.** Don't try to rush home because that can put you at a higher risk of causing an accident. If there is a rest area nearby, pull over and take a short nap to help you rejuvenate.
- If you're finishing a late or long shift, try to **arrange for someone to pick you up.** Driving late at night or when your body is physically tired can put you at risk for an accident.

These tips are also applicable while you are at work. If you feel tired while operating machinery, driving a forklift, or completing a hazardous task, take a break or ask for help. There is no benefit to finishing work quickly if you get hurt or hurt someone else.

Wednesday – Identifying Fatigue

The ability to identify when you're feeling fatigued is the first step in preventing it from affecting your work. How do you identify fatigue?

Fatigue is so common that many times its effects can go unnoticed. Constantly working through fatigue can lead to a lack of productivity and a decrease in work quality.

In order to help you identify fatigue, here are some common signs of fatigue:

- **Lack of Focus:** Do you ever get the nods? Your head is bobbing up and down, and your eyes stay closed a few seconds before they open again. Or the nap jerk? You're working at the computer or at your workstation, and your eyes glaze over and suddenly your whole upper body shakes? These are ways that sleep deprivation makes focusing on the task at hand very difficult.
- **Yawning:** Usually associated with tiredness, yawning is the body's natural way of getting more oxygen to the lungs and brain in a short burst. Constant yawning throughout the day – even if you have had multiple cups of coffee - is a sign of fatigue.
- **Memory Loss:** Fatigue can affect your ability to remember things. Do you remember the last two tips we just talked about? What were they? If you find yourself frequently forgetting things, take a 15-minute nap.
- **Difficulty Problem Solving:** Solving problems is a higher level thinking skill that can be difficult when the brain is not getting enough oxygen or energy.

If you feel that you are tired and not focused on your work, take a break. Most of the time, poor quality work will not meet standards. If you notice signs of fatigue, do not ignore them or try to work through them!

Thursday – Fighting Fatigue

While there isn't a way to completely prevent fatigue, there are small changes you can make and steps you can take to try to keep it away.



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According to WebMD, here are some tips to help you when fatigue hits [5]:

- **Is it your health?** Many times, fatigue is a side effect of an illness or certain medications. Speak with your doctor to figure out if this is the cause of your fatigue.
- **Exercise!** If you live a sedentary lifestyle, incorporating some physical activity into your week can help you fight fatigue. Consider signing up for a yoga, cycling, or weight training class to help you get more active. Exercise increases blood flow to the brain and the extremities (hands and feet).
- **Get enough sleep.** This is a no-brainer, but many people do not get enough overnight sleep. If you experience fatigue and tiredness throughout the day, make an effort to go to bed one hour earlier for a few nights and see how you feel. If you wake up often during the night, make sure the room is dark and quiet, change the temperature in the room, stop drinking caffeine before 5 PM, get a new or different mattress, and even try a weighted blanket or multiple blankets. Make one change at a time and experiment with what works.

Some people experience more fatigue when they are under unusual stress at work or at home, or combined. Stress is emotional, while fatigue is physical. That said, stress can cause physical fatigue effects, and physical fatigue can make you more emotional. Try to recognize that when you are under stress, allow more time for sleep. And when you are physically tired, try not to react emotionally to issues or make major life-changing decisions; sleep on it first.

For more tips, refer to WebMD's [9 Ways to Combat Fatigue](#).

Friday – Discussion

How many hours of sleep do you think you get on average? Do you feel that it is enough for you to get through the day at your full potential? If not, do you find yourself constantly working through fatigue? Have you experienced any negative effects of sleep deprivation? Do you think you can warn a teammate if you think they are acting fatigued and drowsy? Discuss with the group.