

Introduction

How many hours of sleep are you getting each night? Most healthy adults need 7–9 hours of sleep, but many people fall short which leads to fatigue, slower reaction times, reduced focus, and an increased risk of accidents both at work and at home.

This week we will discuss the differences between tiredness and fatigue, how lack of sleep affects safety, how to identify fatigue early, and practical tips for managing it before it becomes a hazard.

Monday – Fatigue and Tiredness: What’s the Difference?

When you hear the word *fatigue*, you might think of tiredness, drowsiness, or sleepiness and while these can be symptoms, fatigue is more complex.

Everyday tiredness often comes from a long day, physical exertion, or too little sleep and is usually improved with proper rest.

Fatigue, however, isn’t always fixed by sleep. According to the Mayo Clinic, fatigue can be an “unrelenting exhaustion, a constant state of weariness, and a lack of motivation and concentration.” If fatigue persists despite adequate rest, it may indicate an underlying health or dietary issue.

Key message:

If you’re experiencing ongoing fatigue that sleep doesn’t improve, talk with your doctor. Untreated fatigue can worsen over time and affect your safety at work and at home.

Tuesday – Negative Effects of a Lack of Sleep

When we think of being tired, we might picture yawning at our desk or grabbing extra caffeine. But sleep deprivation contributes to far more serious risks.

- According to Science Daily, 16% of all fatal car crashes involve drowsy driving.
- The National Sleep Foundation reports that employees who are sleep deprived have a 70% higher chance of a workplace accident.

Drowsy driving prevention tips (Sleep Education):

- Get enough sleep. Aim for 7–9 hours; avoid driving if you’re overtired.
- Pull over if you feel tired. A short nap can restore alertness.
- Arrange a ride after long or late shifts whenever possible.

The same applies at work:

If you feel fatigued while operating machinery, driving a forklift, or performing a high-risk task, stop, take a break, or ask for help. Rushing through fatigue only increases the risk of injuries.

Wednesday – Identifying Fatigue

You can't manage fatigue if you don't recognize it. Fatigue often creeps in slowly, and because it's so common, people may ignore or normalize it.

Common signs of fatigue:

- **Lack of Focus:** Head bobbing, heavy eyelids, or “micro-sleeps.”
- **Yawning:** Frequent yawning even after caffeine indicates exhaustion.
- **Memory Lapses:** Forgetting recent conversations, directions, or tasks.
- **Difficulty Problem-Solving:** Higher-level thinking becomes harder when your brain is running low on energy.

Key message:

If you notice these signs, don't power through, take a break. Fatigue leads to mistakes, lower-quality work, and safety risks.

Thursday – Fighting Fatigue

While fatigue can't be eliminated, you can reduce it with healthier habits.

Tips from WebMD:

- Check your health. Some illnesses or medications cause fatigue, consult your doctor if you suspect this.
- Exercise regularly. Even light movement improves blood flow and reduces fatigue.
- Get enough sleep. Try going to bed one hour earlier.

If you wake up frequently during the night, consider:

- Keeping the room dark, quiet, and cooler
- Limiting caffeine after 5 PM
- Checking your mattress condition
- Trying a weighted blanket
- Making one change at a time to see what helps

Stress also plays a big role. Emotional stress can cause physical fatigue, and physical fatigue can make emotions harder to manage. If you're stressed: Allow more sleep time, slow down when you're tired, and avoid making big decisions until you're well rested.

Friday – Reflection

- How many hours of sleep do you *get* each night?
- Do you feel rested, or do you push through fatigue during the day?
- Have you experienced any negative effects of being tired at work?
- Can you speak up if you notice a teammate showing signs of fatigue?