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at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/
work-hour-training-for-nurses](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/work-hour-training-for-nurses).

For some nurses, it may be necessary to
advocate for a more healthful schedule.
If you find yourself in that situation, you
may be able to utilize evidence from the
training program to make your case.

7 Tips to Reduce Fatigue at Work

“Much of the problem of nurse fatigue is a result of the long hours worked and shift rotation, which affects the amount and quality of sleep,” says Professor Alison M. Trinkoff, ScD, MPH, RN, FAAN. In 2015, she and former UMSON faculty member Jeanne Geiger-Brown, PhD '01, RN, FAAN, co-authored an online, evidence-based training program that aims to minimize the health and safety risks associated with shift work, long work hours, and related workplace fatigue issues for nurses. The program recently won the 2017 Bullard-Sherwood Research to Practice Intervention Award from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.

OUR EXPERT

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Below are seven strategies culled from the program that you can use to improve alertness at work.

Nap strategically.

If you can regularly squeeze in a two-hour nap before night shifts or a 20-minute nap during breaks, you should feel more refreshed. Some health care workplaces even offer quiet spaces for uninterrupted naps. Just remember that naps are not a replacement for regular, long periods of sleep.

Rest on your days off, too.

Rest on days off is essential to promote healing from muscle strains and to help reduce the chance of injury. Ideally, you should rest for one or two full days following five consecutive eight-hour shifts or four 10-hour shifts and rest for two days after three consecutive 12-hour shifts.



Take breaks during your shift.

Consider stretching or taking a brisk walk; both can help you relax and reset. Some breaks should be taken outside of the unit you are working in to be most effective.

Eat small, healthy meals.

Avoid sugar-rich products and low-fiber carbohydrates, as these can increase sleepiness. Instead, eat foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole-grain sandwiches, yogurt, eggs, and nuts.

Drink caffeine.

Judicious intake of caffeine during your shift can aid alertness. Keep in mind that you should not drink coffee near the end of your shift if you plan to go home and sleep.

Wear blue-light-blocking sunglasses.

After working night shifts, don these sunglasses (wraparound style is best) to reduce the chance that your body clock resets to daytime, which makes it difficult to sleep. Keep them on until you are in a dark room at home.

Make your bedroom dark.

Whether you're sleeping at night or in the daytime, your bedroom should be very dark. Block light with opaque window coverings – light-blocking shades are inexpensive and available at most hardware stores – and prevent light from coming through under doorways. You can also wear an eye mask. ♦

– L.Z.