

# YOUR SLEEP *schedule*

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**AASIM** American Academy of  
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# WHAT IS AFFECTING *your sleep?*

Your body has an internal clock. This clock signals your body when it is time to fall asleep and time to wake up. The internal clock also controls other body processes, like blood pressure and digestion.

Your internal clock runs approximately on a 24-hour schedule that is called a circadian rhythm. Your body uses light to decide if it is night or day. Normally, you are alert during the day time and sleepy at night. If there is a change in your environment, your body's circadian rhythm can shift over time. After shifting, you may be sleepy during the day and alert at night.

When your time awake and alert does not match the time you need to be doing your job or socializing, you may have a circadian rhythm disorder.



# LEARN ABOUT CIRCADIAN RHYTHM DISORDERS

## **CIRCADIAN RHYTHM DISORDERS**

Some individuals naturally fall asleep and wake up at different hours than most people. These different schedules may make it very difficult to work and socialize with friends at normal times.

### **DELAYED SLEEP PHASE DISORDER:**

If you find it hard to fall asleep before 3 or 4 a.m. and then sleep into the late morning, you may have delayed sleep phase disorder.

### **ADVANCED SLEEP PHASE DISORDER:**

If you find yourself ready for bed at 5 or 6 p.m. and then wake up as early as 2 or 3 a.m., you may have advanced sleep phase disorder.

### **NON-24 HOUR SLEEP PHASE DISORDER:**

This occurs when you have a pattern of sleep and wake that typically delays each day.

### **IRREGULAR SLEEP-WAKE CYCLE:**

This disorder occurs when you have the desire to sleep in 3 or 4 hour intervals throughout the day.

If you think you have a circadian rhythm sleep disorder that is interfering with your life, talk with your health care provider.

For more information, visit [sleepeducation.org](http://sleepeducation.org)

## JET LAG

Jet lag occurs when a person travels across several time zones and has trouble adjusting to the new schedule.

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### **Symptoms include:**

- Trouble falling asleep
  - Feeling tired or disoriented
  - Stomach problems
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## SHIFT WORK DISORDER

Shift work disorder occurs when you have difficulties adjusting to a work schedule that goes against your body's internal clock. You may have to work during your body's preferred sleep time and sleep when your body wants to be awake.



If you normally consider yourself a “night owl” and choose to go to bed late at night, you might have an easier time working the night shift. However, many people have difficulty adjusting to night shifts or rotating shifts.

Not everyone who works shift work suffers from shift work disorder. You may have the disorder if, after a week or more of shift work, you have trouble falling or staying asleep or feel tired even after sleeping 7 – 8 hours.

## **HOW ARE CIRCADIAN RHYTHM DISORDERS TREATED?**

Circadian rhythm disorders may be treated with medications, melatonin, bright light therapy, or behavioral changes.

Medications can help people fall asleep or stay awake. Melatonin is a natural hormone produced in the brain that helps tell your body when it is time for sleep. It is available as an over-the-counter supplement.

Your health care provider can give you more information on if medication or melatonin is right for you.

**BRIGHT LIGHT THERAPY:** Exposure to light helps reinforce your internal clock. Bright light therapy usually involves exposure to special artificial lights at certain times. Your health care provider can design a bright light therapy treatment plan to help reset your internal clock.

## **TIPS FOR COPING WITH SHIFT WORK DISORDER OR JET LAG**

**KEEP A REGULAR ROUTINE:** Night shift workers who sleep during regular nighttime hours on weekends or days off have a harder time adjusting to a shift work schedule. If you work rotating shifts or try to keep a later sleep schedule on your days off.

**EAT REGULAR, MODERATE MEALS:** Try to maintain a regular schedule of meals. Otherwise, you may wake up during the night because you are hungry. Avoid greasy or heavy foods since they can make you feel uncomfortable while trying to sleep.

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***Studies show that shift workers are more likely to become overweight.***

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### **HAVE A GOOD SLEEPING ENVIRONMENT:**

Keep your bedroom dark. You may have put up blackout curtains or use an eye mask. Try to keep your bedroom comfortable. Most people prefer a bedroom around 68°F, but lower or raise the temperature as you feel necessary.

**EXERCISE:** Exercising during the time you are awake can help you fall asleep better. Also, exercise can be a part of your healthy life plan to combat the weight gain often seen with shift work.

### **MODIFY YOUR SLEEP SCHEDULE:**

If you're traveling, try to start shifting your schedule before you leave for the new time zone. Once in the new time zone, don't nap and try to sleep on the new schedule.

**Speak with your health care provider if you have symptoms of a circadian rhythm disorder, including shift work disorder or jet lag.**

**ASK ABOUT  
PERSONALIZATION**

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