



Notes for the Shift Worker

Issue 2/2004

Epworth Sleepiness Quiz

The following questionnaire will help measure your general level of daytime sleepiness. Answers are rated on a reliability scale called the Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS) - the same assessment tool used by sleep experts worldwide.

Each item describes a routine daytime situation. Use the scale below to rate the likelihood that you would doze off or fall asleep (in contrast to just feeling tired) during that activity. If you haven't done some of these things recently, consider how you think they would affect you.

Please note this scale should not be used to make your own diagnosis. It is intended as a tool to help you identify your own level of daytime sleepiness, which can be a symptom of a sleep disorder.

Use the following scale to choose the most appropriate number for each situation:

- 0 = would never doze
- 1 = slight chance of dozing
- 2 = moderate chance of dozing
- 3 = high chance of dozing

Situation: (Score)

Sitting and reading ()

Watching television ()

Sitting inactive in a public place, eg. a theatre or meeting ()

As a passenger in a car for an hour without a break ()

Lying down to rest in the afternoon ()

Sitting and talking to someone

Sitting quietly after lunch (when you've had no alcohol) ()

In a car, while stopped in traffic. ()

SEE OVER FOR RESULTS

Extended working hours

The report of the *Extended Working Hours Review* Panel has been referred by the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection to the Commission for Occupational Safety and Health with the request that it undertake the development of a Working Hours Code of Practice under the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

The Government, however, has not committed itself to the specific parameters e.g. limitations on working hours, consecutive night shifts, which will be subject to further consideration and consultation with stakeholders. The expectancy is that the Code of Practice will be in place by July 2005.

A copy of the report is available online at www.ministers.wa.gov.au/kobelke.

Excessive hours are damaging

Excessive hours culture in the UK damaging health, family and social lives in the road transport industry

Results of research by the Union of Shop, Distribution and Allied Workers in the UK was presented to a key European seminar on working conditions in May.

The research collated from a 2003 survey of 750 drivers found that over 70% said working long hours had damaged their family and social lives while 60% said their health had been damaged.

Regulations come into force in March 2005 through the Road Transport Directive which will set a 48 hour maximum working week for drivers.

The survey can be found online via www.usdaw.org.uk/roadtransport/news/.

Alcohol, learning and sleep

Researchers in Canada used a logic game to test sleep influence on complex cognitive procedural thinking.

They found that people who learnt the game in the afternoon and over-indulged before going to bed performed 40% worse the next time they played than those who stayed sober. One explanation is that alcohol suppresses the REM (rapid eye movement) cycle of sleep and you need a certain amount of REM sleep to learn well.

This perhaps also helps to explain the inability to recall events after a night out.

At Harvard experiments have shown that peoples scores on certain topics of memory tests improve without any additional practice as long as they sleep soundly and for at least six hours the night after first learning the task.

Computers keeping children awake

A report carried out by Dr Luci Wiggs of Oxford University to accompany a poll carried out by Horlicks has shown that the average requirement of 10-12 hours sleep a night for children aged between four to ten years old is being eroded by "electronic stimulation" prior to bedtime.

The report identifies the lack of structured activities as a significant problem and recommends a set bedtime routine to help children to prepare mentally for sleep which should include at least 15 minutes of calm, soothing activities such as reading.

Dr Wiggs noted that impaired sleep quality or quantity may compromise children's physical health, academic achievements and mental health.

Health implications of too little or poor quality sleep

Researchers at the University of Chicago's Sleep Laboratory have carried out some leading research in recent years in addressing its goals of identifying the health implications of too little or poor quality sleep. Much of it is particularly relevant to today's long working hours society.

Deep slow-wave sleep, the most restful stage of non-REM sleep, fell from about 19% at age 25 to barely 5% at ages 35-50. Over the same years, the men's secretion of growth hormone, which occurs mainly in deep sleep, fell by about 75%. By age 45 most men experience little deep sleep and therefore likely secrete little growth hormone, said Eve Van Cauter, Director of the University of Chicago Sleep Lab.

Loss of growth hormone in older people increases fat tissue and abdominal obesity, reduces muscle mass and strength and reduces exercise capacity.

In current research Van Cauter and colleagues are exploring the impact of sleep loss on hunger and appetite. Findings so far show that people limited to four hours sleep always feel hungry and crave carbohydrate and fat-rich foods. They also show changes in secretion of leptin and ghrelin, hormones that regulate hunger and appetite.

Van Cauter speculates that sleep deprived people are most likely to put on weight. She suggests that the general trend for people to sleep less may be implicated in the current world wide epidemic of obesity.

The implications of inadequate quality sleep for physical and mental health are becoming increasingly evident. To continue to ignore their societal consequences would be irresponsible.

For shiftworkers and those on compressed schedules the findings are particularly relevant.

For further information visit online <http://uchospitals.edu/news/publications/midway/index.php>

Home prepared meals - A workplace health hazard?

A US Study has found that nearly 30% of Americans who bring food to the workplace from home do not store it in a refrigerator, making it prone to spoilage and food-borne bacteria.

The vast majority surveyed said they left their food unrefrigerated for more than three hours before eating it, well beyond the safe limit of two hours. Most popular foods included meat and cheese sandwiches, leftovers and salads, all of which are especially susceptible.

Tips to make sure your food is healthy and safe:

- Keep perishable foods refrigerated
- Thaw frozen foods in a refrigerator or microwave
- Keep raw meat separate from ready-to-eat foods
- Always wash your hands with anti-bacterial soap before eating.

Snoring! A risk factor for cardio-vascular disease?

Research studies have shown that hypertension, heart disease and stroke are more common in snorers than in people who do not snore. Snoring may also be an early sign of obstructive sleep apnea and should be taken extremely seriously as a threat to one's long term health.

Preliminary studies have also shown that habitual, loud snoring is associated with excessive daytime sleepiness at work and subjective work performance problems e.g. difficulties with concentration, learning new tasks, performing monotonous tasks.

A study involving 5,000 extended hours employees found that 21% reported snoring loudly "usually or always".

Body temperature makes it mark on sleep

New research at the University of South Australia has indicated that body temperature might be important in determining the onset of sleep. The body starts to lose about one-half to one degree in temperature before one falls asleep. Many insomniacs have impaired thermo-regulatory systems, hence they have difficulty falling asleep.

The body loses temperature one to one and a half hours before falling asleep.

Men admit they're working too hard

Seventy percent of men say their work is suffering because they are working too hard. In a survey conducted by a UK men's magazine in conjunction with the UK Department of Trade and Industry, more than half the men questioned (52%) said their personal relationships were their main priority. Almost a quarter (23%) named their health as the main issue. Despite this they were working longer than they wanted to and didn't have time to exercise.

The survey shows that it's still hard for men to get the work-life balance right, especially if there is an old-fashioned culture where they work. Bosses need to lead by example and make flexible working opportunities more common.

Figures from 2002 suggest that nearly four million people in the UK work more than 48 hours a week.

Epworth Sleepiness Scale Results

If your total score is 10 or higher, consider discussing these results with your physician or other health care provider. You might also wish to seek sleep services in your community for an accurate diagnosis and, if appropriate, effective treatment of an underlying sleep disorder.

Keeping a sleep diary for one week or longer can help you identify any behaviours that might contribute to your sleepiness. Sharing your symptoms as well as the results of the Epworth Sleepiness Scale and a sleep diary with your doctor can aid in your diagnosis and treatment of any underlying cause.

Remember, true excessive daytime sleepiness is almost always caused by an underlying medical condition that can be easily diagnosed and effectively treated.



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