

When circumstances arise that disrupt our daily lives and normal routines, like the coronavirus pandemic, an individual may recognize that they are feeling unusually tired during a particularly stressful time.

Workplace fatigue is when a worker is feeling tired, exhausted, or weary due to stress, anxiety and a lack of quality sleep. Workplace injuries increase when workers' reaction time and awareness are decreased from being fatigued.



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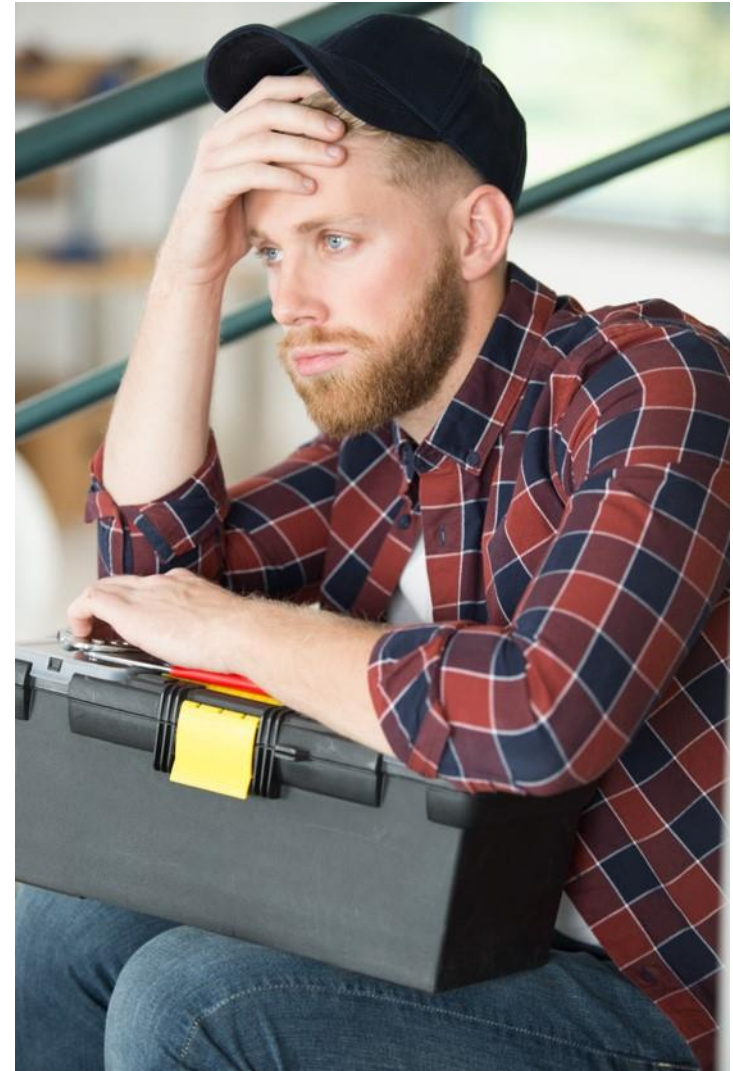
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Taking care of your physical, mental, and emotional health during a difficult time will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and those you care about.

While there is not a single solution to fit everyone's needs, this safety topic covers some general strategies that workers can use to manage workplace fatigue so they can continue to work safely.

Work-related factors that can increase workplace fatigue:

- Increased physical demands at work
- Changes in work routine that may include additional cleaning, disinfection, PPE and hygiene requirements
- Taking care of personal and family needs while working
- Managing a different workload, or adapting to a different workspace or work schedule
- Lack of access to the tools and equipment needed to perform your job
- Work environment that has high temperatures, high noise levels or dim lighting
- Tasks that are repetitive, monotonous, difficult or that require prolonged focus
- Long commutes
- Working overnight shifts
- Lifting heavy objects or operating machinery or tools



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Signs and symptoms of workplace fatigue:

- Feeling tired, weary or sleepy
- Yawning continuously
- Difficulty keeping your eyes open
- Feeling physically or mentally exhausted
- Memory lapses or confusion
- Difficulty concentrating, impaired focus
- Slower reaction times
- Increased errors in judgement, flawed logic
- Emotional instability or irritability

Know what to do if you feel too tired to work safely.

- Use a buddy system while you're at work. **Check in with each other** to ensure everyone is coping with work hours and demands.
- **Report any fatigue-related events** or close-calls to a manager to help prevent injuries and errors.
- **Do not work if your fatigue threatens the safety of yourself or others.** At any time, if stressful feelings result in symptoms like fatigue or difficulty concentrating that interfere in your ability to do your job safely, make sure you talk to management so you can work together to come up with solutions that will maintain a safe working environment.

Recognize that these are stressful and unusual circumstances and you may need more sleep or time to recover. Lack of quality sleep can significantly contribute to workplace fatigue. **Tips to improve sleep include:**

- Prioritize sleep by decreasing off-work obligations as much as possible.
- Eat healthy foods and stay physically active because it can improve your sleep.
- Take naps when you have the opportunity. Use strategically timed naps to decrease fatigue.
 - Short naps (15-30 minutes) can help to decrease fatigue during work hours.
 - Longer naps (1.5 hours) before working a night shift can help prevent fatigue at work.
- Create a pre-sleep, bedtime routine.
- Before you go to sleep, avoid meals, snacks, smoking and alcohol that can make falling or staying asleep more difficult.
 - Avoid alcohol, spicy food, heavy meals, and nicotine for at least 2–3 hours before bedtime.
 - Don't drink caffeine within 5 hours of bedtime.
- Avoid sunlight or bright lights 1.5 hours before you go to sleep.
- Keep your sleeping environment comfortable, dark, cool, and quiet. If it takes you longer than 15 minutes to fall asleep, set aside some time before bedtime to do things to help you relax.



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By building resilience, managing job stress, and developing a consistent daily routine with good sleep habits, workers can reduce the risks associated with workplace fatigue.

- **Communicate** with your co-workers, supervisors, and employees about job stress. Identify things that cause stress and workplace fatigue and work together to identify solutions.
- **Protect your mental health.** Spend time outdoors, either being physically active or relaxing. Do things you enjoy during non-work hours.
- **Connect with others.** Talk to people you trust about your concerns, how you are feeling, and how current events are affecting you.
- **Take breaks from work** to stretch, exercise or check-in with supportive co-workers, family or friends.
- **Stay informed.** Know the facts, understand the risks, and share accurate information, but **avoid over-exposure to news.** Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about any crisis repeatedly, like the pandemic, can be upsetting and mentally exhausting.
- **Seek help when needed.** If you feel you may be misusing alcohol, illicit or prescription drugs as a means of coping with workplace fatigue, reach out for help.



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