

**Before your shift: assessing whether you're likely to be too fatigued**

Sometimes we can suffer from fatigue without realising. Before you travel to work for your shift, ask yourself the following questions. When considering how much sleep you've had, remember that we're all different but most adults need 7 to 9 hours sleep per night on a regular basis for optimal health and performance.

<p><b>1. By the time I finish my shift (or if driving, get back to my home/hotel), how much sleep will I have had in the previous 24 hours?</b></p> <p><i>Working it out: What time will I finish work (or if driving, get back to my home/hotel)? How much sleep will I have had between this time and the same time on the day before?</i></p>		
More than 7 hours	6 – 7 hours	Less than 6 hours
<p><b>2. By the time I finish my shift (or if driving, get back to my home/hotel), how much sleep will I have had in the previous 48 hours?</b></p> <p><i>Working it out: What time will I finish work (or if driving, get back to my home/hotel)? How much sleep will I have had between this time and the same time two days before?</i></p>		
More than 14 hours	12 – 14 hours	Less than 12 hours
<p><b>3. By the time I finish my shift (or if driving, get back to my home/hotel), will I have been awake for more than 16 hours? Will I have been awake for more than the hours sleep I've had in the last 48 hours?</b></p> <p><i>Working it out: What time did I wake up from my last sleep? What time will I finish my shift (or if driving, get back to my home/hotel)? Work out the difference between these two – is it more than 16 hours? Is it more than the answer to question 2?</i></p>		
No	Unlikely	Yes
<p><b>4. Have I had less than the usual amount and quality of sleep I need?</b></p> <p><i>Sleep quality: think about how restful your sleep felt and how often it was interrupted.</i></p>		
I got at least my usual amount and quality of sleep	Yes, a bit less than usual	Yes, much less than usual
<p><b>5. Am I experiencing any physical or mental symptoms of fatigue right now?</b></p>		
No	Yes, minor signs	Yes, significant signs
<p><b>6. Do I think I may be suffering from fatigue, or do I have concerns that I am likely to be fatigued in my shift or on my journey home?</b></p>		
No	I don't think so	Yes

7. How do I feel right now? (Make sure you have been awake for at least 20 minutes before answering this question)								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Extremely alert	Very alert	Alert	Rather alert	Neither alert nor sleepy	Some signs of sleepiness	Sleepy, but no effort to keep awake	Sleepy, some effort to keep awake	Very sleepy, great effort to keep awake, fighting sleep

If ANY of your answers to Questions 1 to 7 are in the righthand box, speak to your manager or someone else you trust immediately, for example a union health and safety representative.

### Signs of fatigue

To help answer Question 5, staff should be made aware of the following signs of fatigue:

Sleepiness	Frequent yawning
	Feeling sleepy even after sleep, wanting to go back to sleep
Energy level and mood	Lack of energy
	Drop in motivation
	Decline in mood
Concentration	Difficulty concentrating
	Wandering thoughts
	Slowed reflexes and responses
	Having near misses due to inattention (e.g. on your way to work)
Your eyes and head	Eyes feel uncomfortable, heavy or sore
	Difficulty keeping eyes open
	Trouble focusing eyes
	Blurred vision
	Head feels heavy
Your muscles	Weak muscles
	Aching muscles

**During your shift: assessing your likely fatigue**

Sometimes we can start a shift and begin to suffer from fatigue part way through without realising. Around the middle of your shift take a moment to ask yourself:

How do I feel right now? (If you have taken a nap, make sure you have been awake for at least 20 minutes before answering this question)								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Extremely alert	Very alert	Alert	Rather alert	Neither alert nor sleepy	Some signs of sleepiness	Sleepy, but no effort to keep awake	Sleepy, some effort to keep awake	Very sleepy, great effort to keep awake, fighting sleep

Speak to your manager or someone else you trust immediately, for example a union health and safety representative, if:

- Your answer is in the righthand box, or
- You think you may be suffering from fatigue, or
- You have concerns that you are likely to be fatigued later in your shift or on your journey home.

**Remember**

- Everyone’s different, and many things affect fatigue - your sleep quality, general health & well-being, the nature of your tasks & working environment, the time of day or night etc.
- A “safe” amount of sleep for one person may not be enough for someone else.
- It’s vital to raise any concerns you have, so if in doubt, put safety first - tell your supervisor immediately, and don’t put yourself or others at risk.

**Further information**

For further information on the background to this tool, see

- The Project T1130 report: [RSSB project T1130 "Developing and trialling fitness for duty \(fatigue\) decision aids"](#)
- RSSB’s [Fitness for duty and assessing fatigue - a good practice guide](#)