

# SW SHIFT WORKER™

Achieving a Healthy Balance.

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## Q&A: Shift Lag

**Shift lag commonly affects those who work nights and sleep days.** Here are answers to common questions about shift lag:

### Q: What is shift lag?

**A: Just like people who fly across time zones,** shiftworkers who are awake at night and sleep during the day may experience a disrupted body clock. If you have shift lag, you might feel tired during your shift or while commuting to and from work. You might also have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.



### Q: What problems does shift lag cause?

**A: Shift lag can make you feel** constantly groggy and unfocused, affecting your memory, safety and productivity. It can also cause physical symptoms, such as headaches and gastrointestinal upset.

### Q: How do I deal with shift lag?

**A: You can make the day-night switch easier** on your body with these strategies:

- ✓ **Control light exposure.** Wear dark glasses when you commute home in the morning, and make sure your sleeping area is completely dark. When working at night, make your work area as brightly lit as possible.
- ✓ **Take naps.** If you can't sleep for a long enough stretch, take a nap before you go to work.
- ✓ **Stick to a schedule.** Stick to your work sleep-wake schedule as much as possible on your days off to feel better and experience less shift lag when you return to work.
- ✓ **Use caffeine wisely.** Small amounts of caffeine during the night shift can improve focus and alertness. But don't overdo it. Too much caffeine can cause sleep problems or other side effects.

## Flu Shot Reminder



**The time to get a flu shot is now,** before flu season is in full swing. Remember:

- The flu shot doesn't take effect immediately. It takes 2 weeks for you to develop immunity after the shot.
- You need a flu shot every year. Flu viruses change from year to year, and your immunity from the previous year's vaccine has worn off.
- The flu is serious. Getting the flu means you will lose time from work and possibly infect family, friends and coworkers, as well as increase your risk for complications such as pneumonia and bronchitis.
- You can't get sick from a flu shot. Side effects are minimal.
- Everyone 6 months and older should get vaccinated. The flu shot is especially important for people with conditions such as asthma or diabetes, pregnant women, people younger than 5 and older than 65, and people who care for or live with someone who is ill or disabled.

## Parking Lot Safety



**If you leave or arrive at work in the early morning or late-night hours,** take extra precautions for getting to and from your vehicle safely:

- Park as close to work as possible in a well-lit space.
- Have your keys out and ready to avoid searching for them when you reach your vehicle.
- Use the main entrance if possible.
- Ask a coworker to watch you from a window or door as you walk to your vehicle.
- Don't approach someone lingering near your vehicle. Go back inside the building or walk to a safe place such as a gas station, and call the police.
- Walk with a coworker.
- Stay on main walkways that are well lit.
- Don't wear earbuds or use your phone. Stay alert to your surroundings.

# Heart Attack Signs

Someone has a heart attack every 34 seconds in the U.S. It rarely looks like the dramatic events you see on television and in the movies. Do you know the signs of a heart attack?

## They include:

- Squeezing, pressure, fullness or pain in the chest. It might go away and come back.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body, such as the arms (not just the left arm), back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath, with or without chest pain.
- Cold sweats.
- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Lightheadedness.

**Note:** Women may experience heart attacks differently than men. Women may be more likely to have pain in the jaw or back, shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting.

**When you have these symptoms or see them in someone else, call 911. Never drive yourself (or another person who has symptoms) to the hospital.**

## Cholesterol: *What You Need to Know*

**Cholesterol is a waxy substance that occurs naturally in your bloodstream.** While your body needs cholesterol, too much of it can raise your heart disease risk and increase your chances of a heart attack or stroke.

**Due to recently revised guidelines,** your health care provider may focus less on your specific cholesterol numbers to lower risk, and address other risk factors including age, family history, obesity and other health problems.

Generally, your total cholesterol should be below 200 mm/dL, LDL should be 100 to 129, and HDL should be above 50.

While unhealthy cholesterol can be hereditary, you can also control your cholesterol levels with lifestyle choices:

- ✓ **Exercise.** Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity, such as walking, every week.
- ✓ **Eat a healthy diet.** Avoid high-calorie, fatty foods such as fried items and processed meats, and eat mostly vegetables, fruits and whole grains.
- ✓ **Stay at a healthy weight,** and lose weight if you need to. Even a small weight loss can improve cholesterol.
- ✓ **Take cholesterol-lowering medication** if your health care provider prescribes it.



## Overeating?

**Poor sleep may be the culprit.**

A recent study published in the *Journal of Health Psychology* suggests that you might make fewer healthy food choices after you have slept badly. Disrupted sleep patterns, such as those that can accompany shiftwork, may lead you to eat more and to feel hungrier, and perhaps use food to compensate for feeling tired. When you haven't slept well, it's important to be extra vigilant about nutrition.

## Sleep Aids

Many shiftworkers have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, and may turn to sleep aids for relief. Learn the facts about sleep medications, so you can use them wisely:

**Over-the-counter sleep aids** contain an antihistamine, an ingredient in allergy remedies. Antihistamines are generally safe, but they can cause nausea, constipation, dry mouth, urinary retention and blurred vision. You might continue to feel drowsy after you wake up, which could pose a danger if you drive or operate machinery. Alcohol intensifies their effects. Over-the-counter sleep aids tend to work less effectively the longer you take them.

**Prescription sleep aids** are designed to help you get the sleep you need while you address the underlying causes of your insomnia. However, long-term use of these medications can lead to dependence. Some have side effects such as dizziness, lightheadedness, headaches, gastrointestinal problems and extended drowsiness, as well as memory and performance problems. Consult your health care provider about the benefits and risks, and only use all medications for the recommended amount of time.

**Medications that help you sleep more and better can provide temporary relief, but they don't address the causes of insomnia.** If you have trouble sleeping or need sleep aids for 2 weeks or more, see your health care provider.



Smart Moves toolkit is at [www.personalbest.com/extras/15V9tools](http://www.personalbest.com/extras/15V9tools).

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