

No Sleep Last Night? The Workplace Impact

Coming into the office early, staying late and answering emails at all hours help people feel important yet negatively impact work performance. In today's busy world many workplace leaders wear busyness as a "badge of courage".

The demands of modern society lead people to address the demands by cutting back on sleep. Medical problems like sleep apnea, asthma, emphysema, anxiety, depression, congestive heart failure, cancer and chronic pain can also lead to sleep deprivation.

The research shows that loss of sleep can result in:

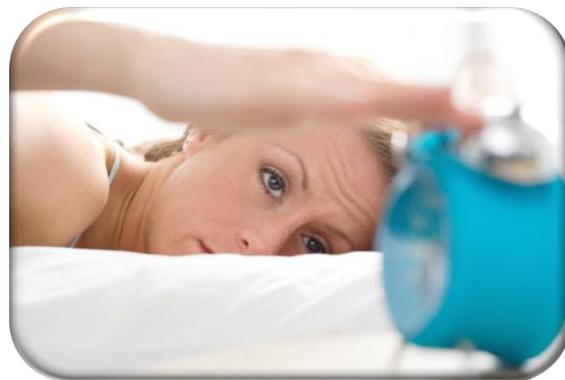
- Increased errors in the workplace
- Decreased productivity
- Increase in accidents
- Cardiovascular disease
- Changes in immune function
- Reduced vision
- Motor deficits
- Irritability and increased conflicts
- Poor judgment and problem solving
- Absenteeism

Research has also shown the benefits of a good night's sleep. **Sleep plays a critical role in immune function, metabolism, memory, learning and other vital biological functions.** With a good night's sleep we are more alert, energetic and able to consolidate memory and learning. When sleep deprived, one's attention and focus tends to drift making it difficult to accomplish tasks. Sleep deprivation impacts one's ability to make sound judgments and decisions thus significantly impact work performance.

What can the workplace do to address the lack of productivity associated with sleep deprivation? **Does workplace stress impact sleep patterns?** How does the workplace change the thinking that more is better when longer work hours and the expanded expectations of the 24 hour electronic workplace may make it difficult to "unplug" and get a good night's sleep? How does the workplace evaluate if sleep deprivation is leading to a decline in productivity?

An examination of workplace culture is an important component in evaluating productivity and the impact of culture on health and productivity. As is often the case, much rests with a manager's astute observation of job performance, documentation of concerns and talking with employees about problems and concerns regarding job performance. The lack of sleep can manifest in job performance and a good manager will address the performance problems with the employee. The manager will not know the job performance concerns are due to the lack of sleep but raising the concerns with the employee can result in motivating the employee to address the problem.

When managers ignore the problem in hopes that it will resolve itself, the problem continues and often escalates leading to many of the productivity problems mentioned above. An effective manager need not know the problem is due to lack of sleep but should address the job performance issues. A referral to the EAP can help the employee evaluate the cause of the problems and make changes to lifestyle, sleep habits or pursue a medical evaluation. **Effective management skills regardless of the cause of the performance problem will lead to improved productivity and bottom line results.**



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