

NATURAL SLEEPING AID SUPPORT

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Shift Worker & Jet Lag Recovery Protocol

Resetting a Disrupted Circadian Rhythm — Science-Based Strategies

For educational purposes only. Not medical advice. Consult a qualified sleep specialist or physician for your individual needs.

Circadian misalignment — when your internal biological clock conflicts with your external schedule — is associated with significantly elevated risks of metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, immune dysfunction, and cognitive decline. This protocol provides specific strategies for both shift workers and frequent travellers.

Night shift workers face the greatest circadian burden. These strategies minimise misalignment damage:

- Block OUT all sunlight during daytime sleep using blackout curtains AND a sleep mask — even small light leaks suppress melatonin.
- Use earplugs and white noise or pink noise to block daytime household sounds.
- Maintain a fixed daytime sleep window — commit to the same sleep and wake times on ALL days off.
- Avoid long "recovery" sleeps on days off (e.g., sleeping 12 hours) — this restarts the misalignment cycle.
- Eat your primary meal BEFORE your shift (pre-shift "breakfast") regardless of the clock time.
- Do NOT eat a heavy meal in the middle of the night — this sends a strong "daytime" signal to peripheral organ clocks.
- Use bright (10,000 lux) light therapy for 20–30 minutes at the START of your night shift to shift your clock.
- Wear blue-light blocking glasses for the final 2 hours of your shift to begin melatonin onset.
- Take 0.5 mg melatonin immediately upon returning home to signal sleep phase.

Eastward travel (phase advance) is harder than westward travel. Use this protocol to minimise jet lag:

- Begin adjusting your sleep time 3 nights before departure — advance bedtime by 1 hour each night.
- On the plane: set your watch to destination time immediately upon boarding and sleep accordingly.
- Avoid alcohol on the flight — cabin pressure already reduces blood oxygen; alcohol further degrades sleep quality.
- Hydrate aggressively: drink 250 ml water for every hour of flight time.
- Upon arrival (morning local time): get immediate outdoor sunlight exposure for 30+ minutes.
- Stay awake until 9–10 PM local time on your first arrival day regardless of fatigue.
- Take 0.5 mg melatonin at 9 PM local time for 3 nights after arrival.
- Use a light therapy box at 6–8 AM for the first 3 mornings at your destination.

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Westward travel (phase delay) is generally easier to recover from — your body naturally runs slightly longer than 24 hours:

- Delay your sleep and wake time by 1 hour per night in the 3 days before westward departure.
- On arrival: seek bright evening light (6–9 PM local time) on your first 2 days.
- Avoid morning bright light for the first 2 days — it will re-advance your clock prematurely.
- Take 0.5 mg melatonin 2 hours earlier than your habitual home bedtime.
- Most healthy adults adjust to westward travel within 3–5 days without supplemental aids.

Nap Type	Duration	Optimal Timing	Purpose
"Prophylactic" nap	1.5–2 hrs	4–6 hours before night shift	Pre-load sleep bank
"Anchor" nap	20 min	Fixed same time daily	Maintain circadian structure
"Recovery" nap	90 min	Immediately post-shift	Debt repayment
"Caffeine nap"	20 min post-coffee	Mid-shift performance trough	Caffeine onset matches wake

- Time your largest meal to align with your "biological daytime" — the phase when your metabolism is most active.
- For permanent night workers, eat your primary meal at the start of the shift (your biological "morning").
- Avoid high-glycaemic foods (sugary snacks, refined carbs) mid-shift — they cause energy crashes 45 minutes later.
- Prioritise protein + complex carbohydrates at pre-shift meals for sustained alertness.
- Consider time-restricted eating (TRE) — confining all food intake to an 8–10 hour window aligned with your active phase improves metabolic outcomes in shift workers.

Permanent shift workers should undergo annual metabolic screening (fasting glucose, triglycerides, blood pressure) due to elevated cardiovascular risk associated with chronic circadian misalignment.