



REST
REHYDRATE
REFUEL

PROJECT

The graphic features the words 'REST', 'REHYDRATE', and 'REFUEL' in a bold, hand-drawn style. 'REST' is in dark blue with leaf-like shapes on either side. 'REHYDRATE' is in white inside a yellow oval. 'REFUEL' is in orange with leaf-like shapes on either side. The word 'PROJECT' is centered below in a simple black font. There are also some small blue dots scattered around the text.

Rest, Rehydrate, Refuel Project

There is a growing body of evidence linking positive staff experience and good staff health and well-being with improved patient outcomes. Shift work, long working hours and a lack of rest breaks can make it challenging for staff to self-care and look after their own health and well-being.

This project aims to understand the current situation at Sherwood Forest Hospitals in relation to staff breaks, hydration and nutrition. It has been designed to gain an understanding of the barriers to these areas and develop new working practices which will promote staff health and well-being.

The project has been developed in response to the Royal College of Nursing's Rest, Rehydrate, Refuel campaign which encourages all Health and Social Care managers to ensure staff are taking their breaks, are well hydrated and have access to nutritional food. The campaign is also encouraging staff to self-care.

Why is this important?

Research has shown that healthcare workers can walk an average of between four and six miles whilst at work, with some reporting total shift distances of up to seven miles (RCN, 2018). With this in addition to the physical demands of healthcare roles it is important that we maintain our own health and well-being.

In order to maintain your own physical health it is critical to have an awareness of how your body is feeling and respond to it appropriately. Our bodies need to be at the correct state of readiness in order to overcome the challenges and activities presented in both work and home life.

To perform at your best you must address your own basic needs, particularly at work. Think of the safety briefing on an aeroplane 'put your own oxygen mask on before helping others'. You cannot look after the safety of others before you have looked after your own. Patients are always best served by staff functioning at their optimal level.

Three key areas for achieving this are Rest, Rehydrate and Refuel.

Rest

Our bodies need regular periods of rest in order to recover from the physical demands placed upon them. When we analyse data, assess risk or make clinical decisions when tired, our ability to do so is impaired. Therefore regular breaks are essential to the delivery of safe, effective patient care. Breaks should not be thought of as optional and especially when systems are under pressure, are not a luxury; they are fundamentally there to protect our patients (Farquhar, 2017).

A recent survey found that nearly two thirds of nurses did not get to take sufficient breaks on their last shift (RCN, 2018). Even relatively mild sleep deprivation and fatigue can have profound effects on how we think and feel. Crucially some of the first things to be impaired are our insight into our own functioning and our empathy towards others.

You are at risk of fatigue if you are not getting the right amount of sleep for you. This can be caused by:

- Working long hours or long weekly working hours
- Shift working
- Not having rest breaks whilst on duty
- Not having adequate recovery time between shifts
- Unplanned interruptions between sleep

When fatigued you are more likely to:

- Make clinical errors and diagnostic mistakes
- Suffer a needle stick injury or be involved in a road traffic collision driving home

Managing your rest and recovery

Improving sleep quality through a good sleep environment and routine is one of the most important actions you can take.

Your sleep environment:

- Your bed, mattress and pillows should be comfortable and supportive
- Your bedroom should be as dark as possible and cool, between 18-20°C

Good sleep routine:

- Get as much natural daylight as possible while awake
- Exercise and eat regularly (main meal not 2 hours before bed)
- Minimise alcohol, caffeine and nicotine use
- Aim to go to bed and get up at roughly the same time each day
- Limit use of electronic items for 30-60 minutes before going to bed
- Avoid spending long periods of time awake in bed, and if unable to sleep, you should get up and do something relaxing

The need to frequently make decisions about patient care, particularly in busy times, can increase the risk of poor quality decisions over time while on duty.

Where possible:

- Ensure you take breaks to do an activity that is not too taxing
- Keep hydrated and eat healthy to help stay alert
- Plan your breaks at the start of your shift so you can organise your workload accordingly
- Work as a team and support each other to take breaks

(Adapted from BMA - Anticipating and managing fatigue associated with doctors' working patterns)

Managing the nightshift

Working nights is essential in the NHS, but it has consequences, not least for your own health. We are not physiologically evolved to function at night as we do in the daytime, nor are we adapted to achieve good quality sleep during the day. Our circadian rhythm, the powerful drive that helps regulate wake and sleep means that we are at a physiological low when working at night (Farquhar, 2017).

Many Healthcare staff have had the experience of falling asleep, or feeling as if they are driving unsafely, after a night shift. At its worst this can have serious, and sometimes fatal, consequences.

Preparation

- Maintain a good core sleep routine
- Use the 24 hours prior to maximise rest, including having an afternoon nap in the day before your first night shift
- Keep hydrated, eat healthy and consider exercising before you start your shift

During

- Keep well hydrated and aim to maintain normal eating patterns/times as much as possible, consuming healthier and satisfying options and minimising eating between midnight and 6am
- Aim to stick to a consistent routine during each shift and make sure you take a break, working as a team to minimise disruption on breaks
- During breaks, have a nap of no more than 20 minutes and use caffeine sparingly, ideally just before a nap (caffeine takes around 20 minutes to take effect)
- Be aware of the 4am dip, when you are at your lowest physiological ebb, double checking any critical decisions during this time

After

- If you are too tired, do not drive and use public transport where possible
- Wear sunglasses to reduce light exposure
- Have a light meal/snack 30 minutes before going to bed and get to bed as quickly as possible, avoiding alcohol, nicotine and caffeine and the use of electronic items
- Minimise disturbances to your sleep
- When you wake up get 20 minutes exposure to bright light and try some light exercise

Recovery

- After your final night have a 1-2 hour nap before midday and do 'normal activities' in the afternoon
- Aim for as close as normal bedtime and wake time as normal
- Two 'normal' nights rest are usually needed to fully re-establish your usual sleep pattern

(Adapted from BMA - Anticipating and managing fatigue associated with doctors' working patterns)

Rehydrate

The Royal College of Nurses suggests that the pressure of work leads to the inability to drink, go to the toilet and eat. This was demonstrated in a survey in Nursing Standards which found that eight out of ten nurses have gone an entire shift without a single drink of water (Dean,2019). Dehydration can affect cognition and decision-making and therefore is a patient safety issue.

Do you ever experience:

Headaches, feeling tired and weak, confusion, mood swings, lack of concentration or dry lips?

If so you may be experiencing dehydration.

Water makes up two thirds of our body, therefore it is essential that we drink enough fluid to maintain a healthy balance. Water has a wide range of benefits for your body – from removing waste products in urine to lubricating your joints. It can even make your skin look good. Good hydration can help prevent UTI's, headaches and constipation (NHS Inform).

What should I drink?

- Water is a healthy option for quenching your thirst at any time. It has no calories and contains no sugars that can damage teeth.
- Plain tea, fruit tea and coffee (without added sugar) can also be healthy.
- If you do not like the taste of plain water, try sparkling water or add a slice of lemon or lime. You could add some no-added-sugar squash or fruit juice for flavour.
- Many soft drinks, including instant powdered drinks and hot chocolate, are high in sugar.
- It's ok to drink tea and coffee as part of a balanced diet. Bear in mind, though, that caffeinated drinks can make the body produce urine more quickly.
- Caffeine is a stimulant. Drinks containing caffeine can temporarily make us feel more alert or less drowsy.

How much should I drink?

- It is recommended that we drink 1.2 litres which is equivalent to 6-8 glasses or cups of fluid per day

How can I stay hydrated at work?

- Start your shift well hydrated
- Look out for the warning signs of dehydration during your shift and act
- It's better to drink little and often rather than trying to drink a lot all in one go
- Use the hydration stations or water fountains regularly throughout your shift. If you do not have these keep a water bottle with you in your work area
- Set an alarm to remind you to drink regularly
- Support and encourage each other
- Take your rest breaks
- Talk to your line manager if you are struggling to stay hydrated at work

(Adapted from NHS – water, drinks and your health)

Refuel

Food is energy and during a physical shift where you are on your feet for long periods, it is important to eat nutritional food that releases energy slowly. Eating a healthy balanced diet can provide us with all the energy we need to get through our day. Our bodies give us clear signs of hunger from starting to think about food and having an urge to eat right through to being irritable and lacking energy, you might even start to feel nauseous. The consequences of ignoring these early signs might mean you then go on to experience headaches, feeling dizzy and lack concentration (NHS Inform).

What should I eat?

- Preparation is key. Don't go to work hungry, as that may lead to unhealthy choices later in your shift.
- You need to eat at least one meal and some snacks during your shift so it pays to plan your food.
- Keep your energy levels up by incorporating 'slow release', unprocessed foods into your meals such as cereal, sweet potato, brown bread, bananas, yoghurt, berries, eggs and beans.
- If buying food try to stick to salads, soups and jacket potatoes.
- Try to resist sugary, processed snacks as these will give you a short-lived boost before lowering your energy levels. Instead, try a bag of nuts and an apple, or a banana and a brown-bread peanut butter sandwich.

What should I eat on a night shift?

Before

- Eat a main meal with whole grains and other complex starches to curb your hunger and cravings.

During

- Eat your main meal in the earlier part of the evening to provide your body with much needed fuel.
- Sweetened caffeine drinks contribute to total calorie intake and may interfere with the much needed rest at the end of the shift.
- Regular light meals and snacks are less likely to affect alertness or cause drowsiness than a single heavy meal, choose foods that are easy to digest such as pasta, rice, bread, salad, fruit, vegetables and milk products; avoid fatty, spicy and/or heavy meals as these are more difficult to digest. They can make you feel drowsy when you need to be alert.
- Avoid sugary foods, such as chocolate – they provide a short-term energy boost followed by a dip in energy levels. Fruit and vegetables are good snacks as their sugar is converted into energy relatively slowly and they also provide vitamins, minerals and fibre.

After

- Eat a healthy breakfast before your daytime sleep so you don't wake up hungry.

(Adapted from Rimmer, 2019)

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