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A SAFER WORKPLACE STARTS HERE

# SAFETY SCOOP

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## *Disclaimer*

The information presented in this publication is not a definitive guide to government regulations and **does not** relieve persons using this publication from their **responsibilities under applicable legislation**. The appropriate OHS legislation should be **consulted**.

Individual counselling and advice is available from the Manufacturers' Health & Safety Association.

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## Fit For Duty

***What is 'Fit for Duty'***

A state of physical and mental wellness that allows an individual to perform their job safely and effectively without impairment.

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## Fit For Duty

***Impairment can mean:***

- Under the influence of legal and illegal substances (includes some prescription drugs)
- Any physical impairment or injury that restricts the ability to effectively do regular activities
- Increased stress, decreased sleep, decreased mental clarity

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# Fit For Duty

## *Signs of Impairment*

| | |
|---|---|
| Physical changes in appearance | Difficulty focusing on tasks |
| Slurred speech | Forgetfulness |
| Clumsiness | Inappropriate behavior |
| Altered depth perception | Mood fluctuations |
| Slowed reaction time | Change or deterioration in performance |
| Yawning, excessive sleepiness or falling asleep on the job | Change or deterioration in hygiene |

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# Fit For Duty

**Fatigue** can be classified as being in a state of sleepiness, feeling tired and/or weary.

***Common causes of fatigue:***

- Insufficient sleep
- Prolonged mental  or physical work
- Extended periods of stress / anxiety
- Repetitive tasks over long periods

Fatigue can be **acute** (immediate, short term) or **chronic** (long term effects).

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## Fit For Duty

### *Common side effects of fatigue*

- Reduced mental / physical functioning
- Impaired judgement / concentration
- Irritability / boredom / depression
- Loss of appetite / digestive problems
- Reduced alertness / attention / reaction time

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## Fit For Duty

| Research compares lack of sleep to blood alcohol | |
|---|---|
| 17 hours awake = | Blood alcohol content equivalent of 0.05 |
| 21 hours awake = | Blood alcohol content equivalent of 0.08 (Canadian legal limit) |
| 24 hours awake = | Blood alcohol content equivalent of 0.10 |

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# Fit For Duty

Many causes of impairment cannot be proven from a test like drugs and alcohol.

Mental health concerns and fatigue are often overlooked, and signs are not visible until the person may already be in a 'Reacting State'.

| MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| HEALTHY | REACTING | INJURED | ILL |

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# Fit For Duty

| MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| HEALTHY | REACTING | INJURED | ILL |
| Normal fluctuations in mood<br>Takes things in stride<br>Good sense of humour<br>Consistent performance<br>Physically & socially active<br>Confident in self & others<br>Drinking in moderation | Nervousness, irritability<br>Sadness, overwhelmed<br>Displaced sarcasm<br>Procrastination<br>Forgetfulness<br>Trouble sleeping<br>Low energy<br>Muscle tension, headaches<br>Missing an occasional class or deadline<br>Decreased social activity<br>Drinking regularly or in binges to manage stress | Anxiety, anger<br>Pervasive sadness, tearfulness, hopelessness, worthlessness<br>Negative attitude<br>Difficulty concentrating<br>Trouble making decisions<br>Decreased performance, regularly missing classes/deadlines, or over work<br>Restless, disturbed sleep<br>Avoidance, social withdrawal<br>Increase used of alcohol-hard to control | Excessive anxiety<br>Panic attacks<br>Easily enraged, aggressive<br>Depressed mood, numb<br>Cannot concentrate<br>Inability to make decisions<br>Cannot fall asleep/stay asleep<br>Constant fatigue, illness<br>Absent from social events/classes<br>Suicidal thoughts/intent<br>Unusual sensory experiences (hearing or seeing things)<br>Alcohol or other addiction |
| Nurture support systems. | Recognize limits, take breaks, identify problems early, seek support. | Tune into own signs of distress. Talk to someone, ask for help. Make self-care a priority. Don't withdraw. | Seek professional care. Follow recommendations. |

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## Fit For Duty

***Reducing mental health stigma***

Talk **openly** about the importance of mental wellness and utilize resources such as an **Employee Assistance Program** to seek help in dealing with mental health and other life challenges.

*Speak with your HR department to find out what is available to you.*

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## Fit For Duty

***Sleep disruptions***

Sleep can be **impacted** by many things:

- Change to work shift
- Extended work periods/ overtime
- Repetitive tasks
- Poor quality of sleep

Some of these factors we have **control over**, some we do not.

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## Fit For Duty

***Example:***
***Daylight Savings Time is March 10, 2024!***

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## Fit For Duty

***Here are some tips to prepare for the time change:***

- Slowly adjust your schedule the week before
- Try going to bed 15-20 minutes earlier (staying up later can put you in a deficit)
- Avoid excessive drinking
- Try meditation or low impact exercise to reduce stress & anxiety
- Limit electronics, high stress activities, caffeine and heavy meals before bed

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# Fit For Duty

### *Stressors*

Both workplace and at-home stressors can impact our fitness for duty. Stress is a factor that can be hard to detect, especially if people feel expressing their concerns could burden others.

It is important to identify signs of stress as they can take a toll on the body.

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# Fit For Duty

### *Common Signs of Stress:*

- Headaches
- Tightness in chest/shortness of breath
- Grinding teeth/clenching jaw
- Feeling tired/anxious/depressed
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Deterioration in appearance

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# Fit For Duty

## Shared Responsibility

| Employers | Supervisors | Workers |
|---|---|---|
| • Set clear expectations of Fit for Duty<br>• Provide resources and support to employees | • Ensure workers arrive and remain fit for duty<br>• Evaluate fitness for duty throughout the workday | • Arrive and remain fit for duty at work<br>• Report to supervision when duties need to be modified<br>• Seek help and resources |

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# Thank you!

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## Resources

https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/fatigue.html

https://www.alberta.ca/impairment-workplace

https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=abq4925

https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/impairment/impairment.html

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## Have Questions? Contact us!

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To register for a course or access our other Safety Scoops visit https://www.mhsa.ab.ca/

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