

Night workers health assessment

The Working Time Regulations came into effect from 1 October 1998. These regulations implemented the Working Time Directive which was adopted by the European Council under health and safety provisions.

The regulations cover, amongst other things, the regulation of night work and a free health assessment for all night workers with a possibility to transfer to day work (where it is available) if working at nights is damaging a worker's health.

All employees transferring to regular or permanent night work (night workers, as defined within the Regulations) should therefore be offered a voluntary health screening before night work commences, and thereafter on a regular basis (normally annually).

Definitions contained in the regulations

Night Time is a period of not less than 7 hours including the period between midnight and 5 am.

Night Worker means an employee who, during night time, normally works at least 3 hours of their daily working time or who is likely, during night time, to work a certain proportion of their annual working time.

Aim of the assessment

The aim of the assessment is to ensure that the employee's night work should not exacerbate any existing medical condition they may have. This is a voluntary screening and should not be used as 'fitness to perform night work'.

Rationale

Some conditions which do not present a problem under normal working conditions may be affected by night work. Similarly, the effect of some medications may affect an employee's performance at night. For example:

- ▶ Diabetes – particularly where there is evidence of unstable control or where the individual is not confident in the management of their condition
- ▶ Heart and circulatory disorders – where factors such as physical stamina are affected
- ▶ Stomach or intestinal disorders – such as ulcers, and conditions where the timing of a meal is particularly important
- ▶ Medical conditions affecting sleep
- ▶ Chronic chest disorders – where night-time symptoms may be particularly troublesome
- ▶ Other medical conditions – requiring regular medication on a strict time table
- ▶ Use of medications – which have a side effect of increased drowsiness or loss of concentration
- ▶ Disorders of mood – for example depressive disorders, particularly if recurrent.

Procedure

All new entrants for night work, or employees transferring to a position involving regular or permanent night work, should be offered (by their employer) a Night Workers Health Assessment form to complete (this can be completed online if preferred). If the employee chooses to complete this then it should be forwarded in confidence to the Occupational Health Advisor (OHA).

The information given will be assessed in relation to:

- ▶ how night work could affect the employee's health
- ▶ if any workplace adjustments are needed.



'Employees on regular or permanent night work should be offered a voluntary health screening on a regular basis.'





If there are no medical concerns regarding the employee's ability to work nights then:

- ▶ the employee should receive feedback in the form of a letter acknowledging receipt of the form and indicating it will be filed in confidence
- ▶ HR should receive a note indicating a form has been returned and no further assessment is required.

If further assessment of the employee's health is needed, the employee will be contacted by the OHA to discuss this. An appropriate report can then be fed back with the employee's consent to HR once the assessment has been completed.

Advice given to the employer will focus on:

- ▶ how night work could affect the employee's health;
- ▶ if any workplace adjustments are needed.

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About Us

We work with employers to provide support and practical guidance regarding effective management of sickness absence and other relevant employee health issues.

Our services aim to help you:

- ▶ avoid costly claims by ensuring you meet your legal and statutory responsibilities
- ▶ comply with Health and Safety and Disability legislation
- ▶ reduce the costs to your business of staff sickness absence
- ▶ prevent and remove health risks arising in the workplace
- ▶ achieve maximum staff productivity by reducing absences due to ill-health
- ▶ improve the overall health and wellbeing of your workforce
- ▶ increase your staff retention and productivity
- ▶ effectively manage employees who are off sick (especially long-term cases) and develop individual return-to-work strategies
- ▶ introduce cost-effective and proactive health promotion campaigns
- ▶ address complex stress and mental health cases.

Contact detail

To discuss your specific requirements and obtain a quote please contact:



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