

# Night Shift Survival Card

Before / during / after your shift — tape this inside your locker

## BEFORE A NIGHT SHIFT

- ☐ Nap 90 minutes around 7–8 PM — the single best preparation for the night ahead
- ☐ Before your first night of a stretch: sleep as late into the morning as you can
- ☐ Pack sunglasses for the commute home

## DURING THE SHIFT

- ☐ Bright light for the first half of the shift — work in the best-lit area you can
- ☐ Caffeine early only: first half of the shift, nothing within 5–6 hours of your planned bedtime (for a typical night shift, nothing after ~3 AM)
- ☐ 20-minute nap on your break if permitted — set an alarm; longer risks grogginess
- ☐ During the 3–5 AM low point: move — stairs, a brisk walk, an active task
- ☐ Fighting sleep at shift's end? Take a 20-minute nap BEFORE driving home

## AFTER THE SHIFT

- ☐ Sunglasses on for the commute — morning light tells your brain to wake up
- ☐ Light snack only, not a full meal
- ☐ Straight to bed: blackout dark (curtains or mask), cool (65–68°F), quiet (earplugs / white noise)
- ☐ Phone on Do Not Disturb; “day sleeper” sign on the door if interruptions are a problem
- ☐ Wake after 4–5 hours and can't get back to sleep? Get up — add a 60–90 minute nap in the late afternoon instead of lying there

## COMING OFF YOUR LAST NIGHT SHIFT (BACK TO DAY LIFE)

| When     | What to Do                                                                  |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Morning  | Short 2–3 hour “recovery nap” only — set an alarm; don't sleep the day away |
| Midday   | Get up, get outside into daylight, stay active — daylight resets your clock |
| Evening  | Go to bed at a normal-ish hour; expect to be tired today                    |
| Next day | You wake roughly back on a day schedule — instead of lying awake at 3 AM    |

**Key Insight:** Anchor sleep: protect a core 4-hour block of sleep at the same clock time every single day — work days and days off alike. Your body clock can hold onto this anchor even when everything else moves.

**Important:** If you regularly fight sleep on your commute or fall asleep unintentionally despite these steps, talk to a healthcare provider — shift work disorder is a recognized, treatable condition. And never drive when you're struggling to stay awake.