
THE 4-STEP PROTOCOL

Night Shift Sleep *Reset.*

Fix your sleep in 7 days — no matter how brutal your rotation. The exact protocol used by ICU nurses, long-haul pilots, and shift cops to stop running on fumes.

The Problem With Generic Sleep Advice

Your body doesn't know what time zone it's in. Most sleep advice is built for 9-to-5 people — and when you work nights, rotating, or on-call, that advice actively makes things worse. The four steps below are the fix. Do them in order. Most people feel a real difference inside a week.

1 ANCHOR YOUR SLEEP WINDOW

Light is the boss. Sleep timing is second. A fixed window beats a "good" window every time.

- ▶ Pick **one 7-hour sleep block** tied to your shift, and protect it like rent.
- ▶ Night shift (7pm–7am): sleep **8:30am–3:30pm**.
- ▶ Rotating: anchor to your most common shift. Shift by ± 2 hours max on off days.
- ▶ Do not "flip back" to normal hours on days off. This is the #1 mistake that wrecks shift workers.

2 ENGINEER YOUR LIGHT

Light suppresses melatonin in seconds. You can win or lose your sleep before you ever lie down.

- ▶ Drive home: **sunglasses or blue-blockers**, even if it's cloudy. Don't skip this.
- ▶ Bedroom: **blackout curtains** + tape over every LED (router, smoke alarm, charger lights — all of it).
- ▶ 90 minutes before your shift starts: **bright light for 20 minutes** (10,000 lux lamp or sunlight). This is your "morning."
- ▶ If you wake mid-sleep to use the bathroom: red bulb only. No white light.

Fuel & Wind-Down

Sleep timing and light set the stage. Steps 3 and 4 are what actually lets your body fall asleep when it's supposed to — instead of staring at the ceiling for an hour.

3 TIME YOUR FUEL

Caffeine and food are signals to your body clock. Get the timing wrong and you fight chemistry for 8 hours.

- ▶ Caffeine cutoff: **6 hours before sleep.** Non-negotiable. Half-life is longer than you think.
- ▶ Last meal: **3 hours before sleep.** Protein + fiber. Skip heavy carbs.
- ▶ During the biological night (roughly **12am-6am**): minimize eating. Your metabolism is asleep even if you're not.
- ▶ Hydrate hard in the first half of your shift. Taper the last 3 hours so you're not waking up at 11am.

4 BUILD A 20-MINUTE WIND-DOWN

Same routine every shift end. This is the trigger that tells your body: "Sleep now, not later."

- ▶ **0-5 min:** Hot shower. Raises core temp, then it drops — which signals sleep.
- ▶ **5-10 min:** Cool the room to **65-67°F (18-19°C).**
- ▶ **10-15 min:** 300mg magnesium glycinate + 4-7-8 breathing (4 in, 7 hold, 8 out × 4 rounds).
- ▶ **15-20 min:** No phone. Book under red light, or eye mask on.

The 7-Day Reset

Run all four steps together for one week. Don't half-do it. Below is what most people experience day by day — track yours and adjust.

DAYS 1-3

The Resistance

Sleep may not come fast. That's normal. Lie in the dark in your anchor window even if you can't sleep. You're rebuilding a signal, not chasing rest. Energy will dip mid-shift — ride it out.

DAYS 4-5

The Shift

Sleep quality usually clicks here. You'll start falling asleep faster and waking up less. Do not celebrate by breaking the protocol. One late night here costs you four days of progress.

DAYS 6-7

The Lock-In

You're now in rhythm. Stop tracking and just live it. The goal is for this to feel boring — that means the system is working. From here, optimize movement and nutrition.

The 5 Mistakes That Kill This Protocol

- ✗ Flipping to "normal hours" on days off (this restarts the clock every week).
- ✗ Caffeine in the second half of your shift to push through.
- ✗ Phone in bed. Any screen time after wind-down erases the routine.
- ✗ Daytime drinking on off days — alcohol fragments sleep architecture.
- ✗ One "big" meal in the middle of a night shift. It crashes you.

NEXT STEP

This is the foundation. The *full system* goes further.

The 4-Step Reset fixes sleep. But sleep is only one of three levers shift workers need to dial in. The full Shift Worker Recovery System builds movement, nutrition timing, and recovery on top of it — engineered around *your* exact shift pattern.

- The Shift Schedule Builder — personalized sleep / eat / move plan
- Pre-shift, mid-shift & post-shift movement protocols (10–15 min, no equipment)
- Night-shift nutrition: what to eat, when, and what to avoid
- Supplement stack with timing for caffeine, magnesium, melatonin
- 7-Day Quickstart + printable shift planner

[GET THE FULL SYSTEM >](#)

Disclaimer: Educational content only. Not medical advice. If you have a diagnosed sleep disorder or take prescription medication, consult your doctor before changing your routine.

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