

FATIGUE: THE FACTS

“Fatigue is the subjective feeling of the need to sleep, an increased physiological drive to fall asleep and a state of decreased alertness.”¹

1 Restorative sleep

Most adults require 7-8 hours of uninterrupted restorative sleep per night.



2 Sleep debt

A sleep debt occurs after restricted sleep for 2 or more nights.



3 Sleep restriction

Moderate sleep restriction to 6 hours per night for 2 weeks impairs performance equivalent to one night of complete sleep deprivation.



4 Wakefulness

Cognitive function is impaired after 16-18 hours of wakefulness.



5 Dangerous driving

20 hours of wakefulness can cause impaired performance equivalent to being over the UK legal driving limit for alcohol.

6 Age

Sleep patterns are altered and the ability to recover from lack of sleep is reduced by age.



7 Microsleeps

Fatigue induces sleep lapses or microsleeps, which are spontaneous, uncontrolled and often go unrecognised.



8 Recovery

2 consecutive nights of restorative sleep are needed to recover from sleep loss.

The AAGBI guideline *Fatigue and Anaesthetists* 2014 includes information about good sleep habits and recommendations for individuals and departments about how they can mitigate the effects of fatigue.

Reference

1. Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland. *Fatigue and Anaesthetists* 2014. London: AAGBI, 2014 <https://www.aagbi.org/sites/default/files/Fatigue%20Guideline%20web.pdf>