The Effect of Night Shift on Nurses

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Nurses working the night shift risk facing problems in their health and their personal lives. Working night shifts causes disruption to a nurse's circadian rhythm, or body clock.

Sleep Problems
A study conducted at the University of Alabama at Birmingham classified 56 percent of the 289 night shift nurses surveyed as sleep deprived. Poor sleep habits were shown to put both the health and safety of the patient and the nurse at risk.

Health Problems
A research study conducted by Professor Ron Grunstein of the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research found that nurses working the night shift were more likely to be at a high risk for breast cancer, cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal disorders and reproductive problems.

World Health Organization
In 2007 the World Health Organization International Agency for Research on Cancer classified shift workers, such as nurses working the night shift, in the second highest of its five-tier system that grades cancer risks in humans.

Absenteeism
Levels of sickness-related absenteeism were higher among night shift nurses than day workers, according to researchers at Monash University. Symptoms of psychological problems were also increased among night shift nurses.

Relationships
The Monash University research also showed increased problems in marital relationships and increased levels of divorce and separation. Relationships with children were also affected, with increased reports of emotional and behavioral difficulties.

References
- Night Shift Nurses and Poor Sleep Habits
- NSW Nurses Association
- International Agency For Research on Cancer