

Healthy diet and lifestyle tips for shift workers

First thing's first - what should a healthy balanced diet look like?

- Wholegrain or high fibre starchy foods (e.g. pasta, rice, bread, potatoes with skins).
- Fruit and vegetables - a wide variety
- Some good sources of protein (e.g. beans, lentils, fish, lean meat, eggs, nuts, seeds)
- Some lower fat, lower sugar dairy foods (e.g. plain milk and plain yogurt)
- 6-8 drinks each day (water is best)



When buying foods, use traffic light labels. Go for mainly **greens** and limit **reds**.

A good diet can help lower your risk of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers, and help the way you look and the way you feel!

BEFORE your shift

What should I eat?

There are some healthy, filling options you can eat at home (or take to work and re-heat) that will provide lots of nutrients. Making extra, or preparing some of these meals in advance, to eat when you finish your shift, could be a good, time-saving option too! Why not try:

- Porridge with low fat milk, nuts, seeds and dried fruit
- Bean and vegetable chilli with brown rice
- Bagel with chicken, low fat mayonnaise and salad Wholewheat pasta with canned fish, tomato and spinach
- Noodles with stir-fry veg and tofu
- Meat/vegetable and chickpea curry with chapatti

Do you eat lots of processed meat (e.g. sausages, burgers)? Why not swap to less fatty meats like chicken, turkey or lean beef, or some bean alternatives like falafel.



DURING your shift

What should I eat? Try to avoid having large, heavy meals as this can make you feel drowsy. If it is hard to purchase a healthy meal on shift, try to take your own! Filling options which you can prepare at work that will provide lots of nutrients include:

- Wholegrain lower sugar cereal with fruit (like a banana).
- Jacket potato (with skin), baked beans, low-fat cheddar and salad or canned tuna and sweetcorn.
- Low-fat ready meals that have some carbohydrates (rice, noodles or pasta), protein (chicken, beans, prawns or fish), add some veg (can be microwave pack) and/or a side salad.
- Sandwiches with wholemeal bread, rolls or pitta, protein such as chicken, egg or tuna, and salad. If you want to add mayo or sauce, you can find low fat versions!
- Soups - good choices have lots of veg and beans and make sure the salt content isn't too high. Why not add a wholegrain roll or pitta too!
- Fruit and/or low-fat yogurt for dessert or keep for a snack.



AFTER your shift

Getting enough good quality sleep during the daytime can be challenging, but is really important for your overall health and well-being.

Before you sleep

1. Eat breakfast so you won't wake up from hunger - keep meals light. Eating late at night, especially high fat/high calorie meals, may cause indigestion which can disrupt sleep.
2. Avoid drinking alcohol - people sometimes drink alcohol before going to bed to calm them, but it actually disturbs sleep.
3. Relax - get into a relaxing bedtime routine that promotes good sleep, like having a warm shower/bath, reading a book, doing some light stretching (like yoga) and avoiding screen time - so no TV, phone, laptops and tablets before sleeping.



Top tips for...

A healthier lifestyle

In addition to a healthy diet - you should also remember to...

Eat regularly - to help with energy levels, try to have 3 balanced main meals in each 24 hour period, instead of eating very little throughout the day and then a big meal at the end of your shift! Sit down, relax and let your food digest.

Stay active - during breaks or time at home, try to do some regular exercise (even if it's just light - walking up and down stairs). Physical activity can improve quality of sleep and reduce stress as well!



Keep hydrated - don't forget to drink (water is best) to prevent dehydration! Dehydration may make you feel tired and possibly lightheaded. Carrying a re-usable water bottle with you can help remind you to keep hydrated. Hydration can also affect your sleep - drinking too little can cause you to wake during your sleep feeling thirsty; drink too much, and you might wake needing the toilet! Try your best to balance your fluid intake.

Caffeine lovers

Relying on caffeine to stay awake? Too much caffeine can increase anxiety, stop you from sleeping after your shift and may lead to heart problems over time. How much caffeine are you having in one day (average measures)?

Recommended limit of caffeine for adults in 24 hours = 400 mg
You should also try avoiding having more than 200mg in one sitting

If you have ...	
2 mugs of tea	150mg
2 mugs of coffee	200mg
1 large energy drink can (500ml)	160mg

NOTE: Try not to drink any caffeine 4 hours before sleep.

150mg + 200mg + 160mg = you will have gone over the recommended limit of caffeine for adults in a 24 hour period

How much caffeine are you having in one day (average measures)?

Tea	Coffee	Cola	Energy drink (250ml)
75mg	100mg	40mg	80mg

NOTE: If you are pregnant, your daily limit of caffeine is 200mg.

Energy drinks

Find yourself grabbing these often?

Although you may reach for energy drinks to help you stay awake and alert during night shifts, be careful about having too many. Many energy drinks contain lots of added sugars which are linked to tooth decay and weight gain. Drinking just 1 large (500 ml) can of an energy drink can easily take you over the amount of sugar you should be having in a day, so do limit your intake and try to choose 'diet' versions.

REMEMBER: Energy drinks contain caffeine, and having more than 1 small can of energy drink close to bedtime can affect sleep in some people.



Energy boosts

During your night shift, do you often find yourself grabbing sugary foods and drinks like chocolate and biscuits to try and give yourself a quick energy boost? It's a better idea to choose fibre-rich foods, as they release energy more slowly. Why not try these fibre-providing snacks:

- Fruit
- Vegetable sticks
- Unsalted nuts
- Rye crispbread with nut butter
- Wholemeal pitta with houmous
- Lower sugar cereal bar

