

# FACT SHEET

## Eating for shift work

Shift work is difficult as the normal working, eating, and sleeping phases of the day are disturbed.

Shift work takes its toll on:

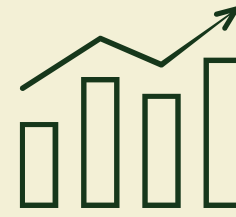
Physical & mental health



Sleep



Performance



Safety



It is helpful to understand that when and what you eat can make a big difference to your mental health and wellbeing.

Research shows that eating a meal at 3pm is very different to eating the same meal at 3am because our body clock tells our organs to do some things at night and some things during the day.

Digestion is a day time process, and when we eat at night, glucose is not processed as efficiently, and instead it is left circulating in the blood. When this happens regularly the risk for Type 2 Diabetes (T2DM), Cardio Vascular Disease (CVD), depression and obesity are significantly increased.

### DIETARY RECOMMENDATIONS

### WHY

#### MEAL REGULARITY

Try to eat most of your meals during the day, at similar times to when you're not doing night shift. Choose highly nutritious meals high in protein and fibre to keep you full.

Sleep deprivation and stress associated with shift work commonly results in increased intake of highly processed carbohydrate based foods due to fatigue and increased hunger hormones.

#### WHEN TO EAT

Ideally aim to fast for a period of at least 5 hours between 10pm-6am if possible

If you get hungry before bed aim to eat a small protein-based meal 1-2 hours before bed.

If you get hungry try to eat before midnight.

Decreased calorie intake from frequent snacking and allows the digestive system to rest

This will avoid waking because you are hungry and promotes lower blood sugar levels.

To decrease mindless snacking and keep blood sugar levels even and hunger at bay.

#### WHAT TO EAT

If you eat during the night choose protein-based meals with lots of non-starchy vegetables

Protein helps to decrease the amount of glucose in the blood which decreases the risk for T2DM, CVD and obesity

#### WHAT TO DRINK

Stay hydrated with water

Avoid regular and diet softdrinks

Limit caffeine and avoid it completely 4 hours before bed

Important for concentration

Avoid high blood sugar levels

Interferes with quality of sleep

# Examples

## SNACKS

- Boiled eggs
- Nuts
- Yoghurt
- Milk
- Cheese/hummus/peanut butter on wholegrain biscuits
- Tin of tuna
- Hummus and veggie sticks
- Fruit with 100% peanut butter

## MEALS

- Baked beans
- Tuna + lentils or chickpeas and salad
- Boiled egg on wholegrain toast
- Chicken salad
- Chicken and vegetable soup
- Dahl
- Protein and veggie curry/slow cooked meals
- Frittata
- Protein and salad
- Mexican salad cups
- San Choy Bao
- Chicken/beef/pork/tofu stir fry

**N.B This fact sheet contains general nutritional advice only and should not replace individual nutritional information**

*Reference:*

*Meals and meal timing for shift workers.*

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