



Healthy eating and shift work

Shift work and healthy eating is a real balancing act

Shift work presents many challenges, including irregular meal times, varied eating patterns, limited food storage and preparation facilities, greater exposure to fast food and takeaway outlets, and junk food often within easy reach.

Research shows that shift workers are at an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and digestive and sleep problems. This is especially true when combined with poor nutrition and lack of physical activity.

Achieving a healthy balance is possible, it just requires some simple planning before your working week starts.

1. Structure your diet around your waking hours:

When you wake up:

Eat a healthy pre shift meal. Choose one wholegrain carbohydrate, one lean protein or low-fat dairy and lots of vegetables.



Wholegrain toast, poached eggs, avocado and tomato



Grilled chicken, couscous and garden salad



Grilled fish with boiled potato and garden salad



Light chicken curry, small serve of boiled rice and lots of vegetables

During your night shift:

Eat a healthy mid shift meal. Choose one wholegrain carbohydrate, one lean protein or low-fat dairy and lots of vegetables.



Chunky vegetable soup, grain bread roll and low fat cheese



Grilled chicken breast, small serve of wholemeal pasta and lots of vegetables



Lean beef stir fry, small serve of noodles and lots of vegetables



Lean roast beef wholegrain sandwich with lots of salad

End of your night shift or before going to bed:

Eat a healthy light meal. Choose one wholegrain carbohydrate, one lean protein or low-fat dairy and a serve of fruit or vegetables.



Smoothie using low fat milk, fruit, oats and nuts



Eggs, wholegrain toast, baked beans and grilled tomato



Wholegrain wrap, boiled eggs, low fat cheese, spinach leaves, tomato and mushrooms



Bowl of wholegrain wheat biscuits or cereal, low fat milk and fruit

During your shift:

Choose 1-2 small healthy snacks.



Fresh fruits and low fat yoghurt



Mixed raw nuts and dried fruit



Wholegrain crackers with low fat cheese and tomato



Wholemeal sandwich with tuna and salad

Drinks:

Water is the best choice. Aim to drink two litres or more per day depending on the temperature and how active you are. Try adding lemon and mint to flavour your water or herbal tea.



Esky water cooler / water fountain / water bottle

2. Plan your meals and snacks:

Bring healthy meals and snacks from home. It'll help reduce the temptation to buy unhealthy food at work.

- At the start of your week take 10 minutes to list your shifts
- Write a rough plan of what you might eat at main meals that week
- Include a mixture of lean red meat, chicken, fish, legumes (e.g. beans, lentils and chickpeas) and vegetables in your meals
- Prepare a shopping list and include a selection of healthy snacks for each shift
- Fill your fridge, freezer, pantry and work lunch bag with your healthy choices

3. Replace the junk food:

Junk food purchases not only hit your wallet, but also your waistline, and may give you less energy. Keep healthy options at work for example prepared healthy meals in the freezer, fresh fruit and pantry staples like tuna and wholegrain crackers to avoid temptation.

4. Get a sleep routine - aim for 6-8 hours:

Getting your body into a sleep routine reduces your likelihood of seeking unhealthy snacks and caffeine during your shift. It can also reduce your stress hormones and lower your risk of weight gain. Try to remove light from your bedroom if you sleep during daylight hours.

5. If you have to buy takeaway look for healthy options:

Buy ingredients to assemble your own healthy meal e.g. a wholemeal bread roll, lean deli meat slices or tinned fish and mixed salad leaves.

When buying takeaway look for options that contain vegetables or salad, don't be tempted to upsize or add extras like hot chips and soft drink, and avoid deep fried foods.

For more details visit gethealthyatwork.com.au