



## Make the SHIFT

### 9064 - Healthy Eating for Shift Workers



Are you one of the 3 in 10 Canadians that work shifts? Working against your “internal body clock,” known as the circadian rhythm, causes challenges that add extra stress and weight.



#### Shift Work and Nutrition

When your circadian rhythm is interrupted by shift work, what you eat may be out of sync with what your body is able to process. Fats will not be cleared from the blood stream as efficiently and blood sugars will not be regulated appropriately. That is why some foods tolerated well during the day may trouble you if you have them late at night.

#### Health Issues Affecting Shift Workers

- Increased risk of heart disease, angina, high blood pressure and stroke
- Feeling tired or disoriented
- Have trouble falling asleep or getting a good sleep. Chronic sleep deprivation is associated with being overweight and a health risk.
- Digestive problems (constipation, diarrhea, gas, heartburn, indigestion) aggravated by poor nutrition and lack of exercise, common among shift workers.

#### Healthy Foods for Shift Workers

##### Right before bedtime...

##### Whole grain, carbohydrate-based and low-fat foods

- Pitas, breads, bagels, tortillas with hummus and vegetables
- Rice cakes, dry cereal, cereal bars
- Grain salads (couscous, quinoa, bulgur, barley)
- Small muffin with cheese or peanut butter



##### Right before night shifts...

##### Protein-rich foods

- Boiled eggs with any whole grain or vegetables
- Sandwich with chicken, turkey breast, roast beef, pork loin, extra lean ground beef
- Meat substitutes (tofu, nut butters, tempeh)
- Baked beans with salad or vegetables
- Trail mix, nuts, seeds, soy nuts
- Hummus
- Lower fat milk and cheese
- Lower fat cottage cheese and yogurt



References: <http://gov.ns.ca/>, <http://www.eatrightontario.ca/>



## Healthy Eating Tips

<b>Brown bag it</b>	Packing healthy meals and snacks at home makes it easier to eat well during your shift.
<b>Go for balance</b>	Enjoy plenty of vegetables, fruit, and whole grain products. Choose 1% or 2% milk and yogurt, lean meats, and meat alternatives like boiled eggs or peanut butter.
<b>Avoid high fat, fried, or sugary foods</b>	To prevent indigestion or 'heartburn', consume lower fat foods that are not fried or too spicy.
<b>Portion control</b>	If you find yourself eating a large meal twice (first at work, then again at home), try having a lighter meal or snacks every 2-3 hours.
<b>Stay hydrated</b>	Drink plenty of water and other fluids to prevent dehydration, which can leave you feeling tired.
<b>Eat meals according to time of day, not your shift</b>	If you start work in the afternoon, have your main meal in the middle of the day, rather in the middle of your shift. If you work at night, eat your main meal before your shift starts, between 5:00-7:00pm.
<b>Have a late night pick-up</b>	A snack with a little protein will provide sustained energy late at night when you start to feel tired. Try fruit with low fat cheese or half a whole grain bagel with peanut butter.
<b>Cut down on caffeine</b>	Caffeine stays in your system for up to eight hours. It's best to have caffeinated drinks before or early in your shift. Switch to decaffeinated tea or coffee or fruit juice, lower fat milk or water.
<b>Have a light snack before bed</b>	You can improve the quality of your sleep by not going to bed too full or too hungry. Try whole grain cereal with fruit or whole grain toast and jam.
<b>Stay active</b>	Some light exercise before or midway through your shift will give you energy to finish your shift, improve your mood, and help you sleep better. Do some stretches during your break or go for a brisk walk.
<b>Maintain a health body weight</b>	You can reduce your chances of getting heart disease, diabetes, or even some cancers.