



HEALTHY EATING AND *Shift Work*

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

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.

1. Structure your diet around your waking hours:

When preparing healthy meals, aim to choose one wholegrain carbohydrate, one lean protein or low-fat dairy and lots of vegetables. Fruit is another great option for on-the-go snacks or as an addition to lighter meals.

When you wake up:

Eat a healthy pre shift meal. For example:

- 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
- Wholegrain toast, poached eggs, avocado and tomato



During your shift:

Choose 1-2 small healthy snacks. For example:

- Fresh fruits and low fat yoghurt
- Wholegrain crackers with low fat cheese and tomato
- Wholemeal sandwich with tuna and salad
- Mixed raw nuts and dried fruit



During your night shift:

Eat a healthy mid shift meal. For example:

- Chunky vegetable soup, grain bread roll and low fat cheese
- Lean beef stir fry, small serve of noodles and lots of vegetables
- Lean roast beef wholegrain sandwich with lots of salad
- Grilled chicken breast, small serve of wholemeal pasta and lots of vegetables



End of your night shift or before going to bed:

Eat a healthy light meal. For example:

- Eggs, wholegrain toast, baked beans and grilled tomato
- Wholegrain wrap, boiled eggs, low fat cheese, spinach leaves, tomato and mushrooms
- Bowl of wholegrain wheat biscuit or cereal, low fat milk and fruit
- Smoothie using low fat milk, fruit, oats and nuts



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 (in your esky, water cooler/water fountain, or water bottle).



2. Plan your meals and snacks:

Bring healthy meals and snacks from home. It will 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. Develop 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.

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.

