



Shift Work

“What’s on the Line: Nutrition”

About 25% of North Americans are considered shift workers. Several ways shift workers can cope with working afternoon or evening shifts is applying these **healthy eating tips**.

Maintain Regular Eating Pattern.

- Plan to have three meals everyday and one of these meals with family or friends.
- Time your meals carefully. If working an afternoon shift, have your main meal in the middle of the day rather than in the middle of the work shift. Evening shift workers are encouraged to have their main meals in the late afternoon or early evening. Then eat lightly during your night shift and have a moderate breakfast in the morning.
- Drink plenty of water when thirsty.
- Eat a balanced meal that includes food from the four food groups found in **Canada’s Food Guide**.
- Enjoy a variety of food from each of the four food groups.
- Emphasize foods that are high in fibre; lower in fat, such as milk and alternatives; lean meat and alternatives; fruit; and vegetables.
- Reduce the amount of food containing fat due to increased calories that can lead to weight gain and aid in the prevention of cardiovascular disease and some cancers.
- Limit salt, alcohol and caffeine, which may cause distress to your digestive track. Many of us consume coffee and tea to keep us awake during our shifts, but caffeine containing beverages can affect our concentration, coordination, sleep patterns, digestion, blood pressure and behaviour.



Some alternative to beverages containing caffeine are:

- A glass of milk (skim, 1%, 2%).
- 100% real fruit juice.
- Vegetable juice.
- Mineral water.
- Decaffeinated herbal teas.
- Club soda.
- Decaffeinated coffee.
- Water.

“Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide”

Ages in Years	Recommended Number of Food Guide Servings per Day								
	CHILDREN			TEENS		ADULTS			
	2-3	4-8	9-13	14-18		19-50		51+	
Sex	Girls and Boys			Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Vegetables & Fruit	4	5	6	7	8	7-8	8-10	7	7
Grain Products	3	4	6	6	7	6-7	8	6	7
Milk & Alternatives	2	2	3-4	3-4	3-4	2	2	3	3
Meat & Alternatives	1	1	1-2	2	3	2	3	2	3

“Staying Alert”



Our body follows what is called the **Circadian Rhythms** which allow best for activities during the day such as eating and sleeping at night. Below are some tips that can be used to keep yourself awake and alert during your shift.

To **stay alert and awake** during your shift work, eat high-protein foods such as lower-fat cheese (less than 20%), peanut butter, lean meat, eggs, beans and lentils. Stay away from high-protein foods before going to bed to help you sleep better. **Eat** foods that are high in carbohydrates before going to bed to promote sleep. Carbohydrates include foods such as pasta, whole-grain breads, lower-fat crackers, fruit, vegetables and potatoes.

“Not Enough Time in the Day”

For many of us, there is not enough time during the day to accomplish everything on our “To Do List.” Fast food and frozen entrees are fast and convenient, but are high in calories, fat and sodium, which may lead to weight gain and increased risk for cardiovascular diseases. Do you need help managing your time? Here are some tips to help you and your family have a healthy and balanced meal:

- Plan ahead for those meals eaten at home by making a weekly or monthly meal plan.
- Make a grocery list. Pre-washed salads, frozen fruit and vegetables, pre-cut vegetables are a great way to add fruit and vegetable to every meal and are very easy to prepare.

References

“Shiftwork Like Clockwork Employee Handbook,” March 1995, produced and prepared by Porcupine Health Unit (Public Health Nursing and Public Health Nutrition Departments) and Sudbury and District Health Unit (Public Health Nursing and Nutrition Promotion Divisions).

“Eating Around The Clock,” Feb. 15, 1996, produced by the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth (Department of Public Health Services).

“Hey Shift Workers, What’s in your Lunch Box?” 1994, produced and distributed by Ottawa-Carleton Health Department, Heart Beat Program.

www.cchos.ca

www.womenshealthmatters.ca/facts/quick_show_d.cfm?number=297

www.sfl.sk.ca

- Make dishes like soup, chilli and stew, which can be made in batches and pre-portioned into serving sizes that meet your family’s needs.
- For those meals at work, pack it instead. This will help you control the amount of fat, salt and calories eaten at work and decrease reliance on take-out fast food and vending machines.
- Use quick and easy cooking methods such as grilling, barbecuing, microwaving, steaming and stir-frying which will help you prepare nutritious meals fast.

For more information, or a copy of **Canada’s Food Guide**, contact the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit.



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