

# Stay healthy with shift work

For many people, shift work is a great way to get in hours around family commitments. For some people, shift work is simply part of their profession. Nurses, doctors, first responders and many others work shifts because it's necessary.

When you don't work a 9 to 5 shift, it can be harder to find time to eat well and exercise. In the middle of the night, most restaurants and stores are closed. You may also feel tired and less motivated to exercise and eat well. But there are some ways to get around these obstacles.



## Try these healthy tips if you work a shift schedule:

### 1. Stock up on healthy food.

When you're tired, it's easy to simply reach for convenience foods. Instead, keep your favorite fresh foods on hand at home or work and make them convenient. Washed and cut fruits and vegetables are a great snack anytime. You may also try nuts or seeds, oatmeal and hummus.



**2. Make meals before your shift.** Many times, the only choice during shift work is a vending machine. Try cooking large meals in a crock pot and freezing individual portions.

### 3. Avoid large portions.

Many people feel tired and sluggish after a large meal. Pack portions that will fill you up without making you feel stuffed. Between meals, choose pre-packed, healthy snacks.

### 4. Take a break to eat.

Sit down at a table, if possible. Enjoy your food and eat slowly. This can help you avoid overeating or mindless snacking.

### 5. Watch the caffeine.

Many people need at least six hours or more to process caffeine so they can sleep. If you're feeling sluggish, try drinking plenty of water instead of coffee or tea.



### 6. Move your body when you can.

Walk up and down stairs or hallways on breaks. Try stretching at your desk. You can even do some jumping jacks if you don't have time for anything else. Any kind of physical activity can give you more energy and lift your mood.



**7. Remember that sleep is important.** Even if you don't have a typical work schedule, you can still make sleep a priority. Aim for seven to nine hours per 24-hour period. If you can't get that much at once, see if you can still get that much by using naps.

Source: National Sleep Foundation