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Shiftwork & Your Health

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Overview

- Shiftwork
- Physical health effects of shiftwork
- Family and social effects of shiftwork
- Recommendations
 - Personal (Nutrition, Physical Activity, Family)
 - Organizational
- Resources



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Shiftwork

Definition

- Work hours commonly or always worked outside the period between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
- Can be rotational or single shift (i.e. permanent nights)
- Includes evening or night shifts, rotating shifts, split shifts and extended duty hours



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Shiftwork

- 1 in 4 Canadians work outside of the 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. scheduled work period
- The cost of shift work to the Canadian economy could be anywhere between 7 to 15 billion dollars annually
- The number of shift workers appears to be increasing



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Physical Effects of Shiftwork

- Circadian Rhythm
- Sleep patterns
- Gastrointestinal disorders
- Safety



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Circadian Rhythms

- Our body's "biological" clock
- Distinct rhythmic changes in physiological functions in a 24-hour period
- "Reset" every 24 hours by environmental cues (i.e. light and darkness)
- Night shift affects natural rhythm



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Sleep Patterns

- Affects both quality and quantity
- Daytime sleep is seldom as deep or refreshing as sleep at night
- Circadian rhythms are unsynchronized
- Many shift workers report constant fatigue



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Gastrointestinal Disorders

- Indigestion, heartburn, loss of appetite
- Irregular eating times and lack of nutritious options can lead to unhealthy snacking
- Fatigue may encourage unhealthy food and drink consumption



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Safety

- Higher risk of occupational injury
 - Fatigue, human error
 - Less supervision
 - Less co-worker support



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Family & Social Effects

- Rotating shifts can make it difficult to form a family routine
- Many activities occur after regular daytime work hours
- Relationships
 - higher divorce rates
 - communication issues
 - child care



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The good news...

There are solutions that can help
shift workers cope with health
and wellness issues!



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Recommendations

- Personal
 - Nutrition
 - Physical Activity
 - Family/Social
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Healthy Eating is...

- getting enough vitamins, minerals and other nutrients to help reduce disease and achieve overall health and vitality.



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Nutrition for Shift Workers

Healthy Eating reduces the risk of:

- Digestive problems
- Constipation
- Loss of appetite
- Weight problems
- Heart disease



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Nutrition for Shift Workers

Healthy Eating improves:

- Overall well-being
- Sleep patterns
- Mood
- Job performance



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Healthy Eating Tips

Tip #1

- Schedule regular meals
 - Try to eat 3 meals in each 24-hour period
 - Breakfast is the most important meal of the day



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Healthy Eating Tips

Tip #2

- Choose healthy snacks at work
 - Choose nutritious snacks
 - Limit your number of snacks to about 3 each day
 - Choose a variety of snacks



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Snack Ideas

Choose healthy snacks at work

- hard-boiled egg or deviled egg
- yogurt mixed with plain cereal
- any fruit...grapes, bananas, cantaloupe, and apples
- pita pocket with vegetables, sliced meat, cheese, salsa, or hummus



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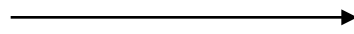
Healthy Eating Tips

Tip #3

- Choose lower fat foods

CHOOSE...

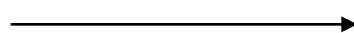
whole grain breads



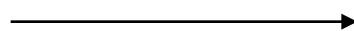
roasted potatoes



skim, 1% or 2% milk



chicken or turkey
without skin



INSTEAD OF...

croissants

French fries

homogenized milk

bacon/sausage



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Healthy Eating Tips

Tip #4

- Limit caffeine
 - Coffee
 - Pop
 - Chocolate
- These foods can cause distress to the digestive tract



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Healthy Eating Tips

Tip #5

- Drink lots of water!
 - Drink at least 8 cups of water per day
 - It helps your body to digest and absorb vitamins and minerals



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Night Shift Meals

- Main Meal
 - Breakfast or “traditional” dinner (5-7pm)
- Work Meal Break
 - Light meal such as a sandwich/wrap and soup
 - Try having a hot meal before midnight
- Snacks (before and during work)
 - Fruit, popcorn, pretzels, baked crackers, dried fruit



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Packing your “Lunch” Bag

- Try these healthy ideas:
 - Whole-wheat bagel, fresh fruit, raw carrots, and low-fat yogurt
 - Swiss cheese, lettuce and mustard on rye bread, 100% orange juice, green pepper strips and dried fruit and nut mix



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Coffee

- Caffeine affects people differently
- It acts on the brain and may affect co-ordination, concentration, sleep patterns, and behaviour
- Try to avoid caffeine for at least 4-5 hours before going to sleep
- Limit intake to no more than four 6-ounce cups of coffee per day



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Food & Sleepiness

- To stay alert include protein foods in meals and snacks during your shift
 - Lean meats, peanut butter, cheese, eggs
- To fall asleep after a shift, try a high carbohydrate meal or snack
 - Whole-wheat pasta, bread, cereals, fruit



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Remember!

- Night Shift:
 - main meal in the late afternoon or early evening rather than in the middle of the night
- Eating healthy during shifts may mean making some changes in the **type** of food you eat and the **timing** of your meals



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Recommendations

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Being Active

- Reduces the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer
- Additional benefits include:
 - Better sleep
 - Less stress
 - More confidence



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When to be active?

- Some people find it difficult to sleep right after exercising
- Instead, try:
 - When you get up
 - Right before your shift
 - During your shift (walk breaks)



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How much?

- 150 minutes of mod-vigorous aerobic exercise per week
- Plus bone and muscle strengthening activities twice per week
- Can be in 10 minute sessions



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Work-Life Balance

- Calendar of family events
 - Medical appointments
 - Family meals
 - Dinner menu
 - Activities
 - School projects due
 - Parent/teacher meetings
 - Shift work schedule & sleep times



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Work-Life Balance

- Daily memo board for unexpected items
 - Leaves notes for each other
 - Grocery list
 - Phone messages
 - Household chores



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Eat Together

- Promoting conversation during meals:
 - Eat at the table
 - Turn off all screens (phone, computer, tv)
 - Remove distractions from table (toys, books)
- Focus on the positive
 - Highlights of the day or week
 - Accomplishments
 - Planning the next family day



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Work-Life Balance

- Other tips:
 - Socialize with other shift workers and their families
 - Keep in touch with spouse and children daily
 - Work on communication skills
 - Plan family activities around your schedule



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Organizational Approaches

- Start and Finish times
- Provide schedules well ahead of time
- Allow as much flexibility as possible
- Good lighting and ventilation at work



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Organizational Approaches

- Rest Facilities
- Nutrition support
- Recreational opportunities
- Day-care



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Resources

- NWHU – HealthWorks
www.nwohealthworks.org
-tips, resources, links, local support
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (CCOHS)
- Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc.



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Questions?

For more information:

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