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# Shift work and healthy eating

Working across different shifts and rosters can present some unique challenges for your health and wellbeing. But the good news is that shift work and good nutrition can easily go hand in hand, if you follow some simple steps. So, let's get started:

## 1 Have a plan

- Look at your shifts for the week ahead
- Plan your meal and snack ideas – here's some inspiration
- Use your plan to write up your shopping list
- Allocate time for food shopping AND meal and snack prepping in your diary

## 2 Make sure you have an action bias!

- Do some meal and snack prepping in advance - even the smallest bit of prep makes you more likely to achieve your eating well goals
- Simple things like ensuring you have suitable containers for portable meals will make it much easier to achieve your goals

## 3 Think about when you will eat

- Regardless of the actual time on the clock, your body processes thrive when your nutrition intake (food and drink) occurs regularly across your waking hours
- Aim to eat your first meal within 1 hour of waking
- Alternate meals and snacks every 3 - 6 hours until bedtime – avoid long gaps without eating and don't use coffee or other caffeinated-options as props

### DID YOU KNOW

The Mediterranean Diet has the biggest supportive research base of any to positively manage the risk of many chronic diseases?





## FOOD FOR SLEEP

Good restorative sleep is critical for everyone. If you work shifts, then your hours can be a barrier to a good sleep routine. Here are some supportive nutrition strategies for good sleep:

Focus on:	Avoid:
Have a comfortable (but not too filling) sized meal, with carbohydrates and protein, an hour or two before bedtime	Too much caffeine. If you rely on coffee, black or green tea, chocolate or energy drinks for a mental boost, make sure your last 'hit' is before the halfway mark of your shift
Foods high in tryptophan (a building block for sleep hormones) are great for your pre-bed meal or snack. Good sources include milk, yoghurt, eggs, chicken, fish, turkey, pumpkin or pepita seeds, peanuts, tofu and soy	Alcohol has a negative impact on sleep quality. Use strategies like easy yoga, stretching or journaling to wind down after work rather than alcoholic drinks
Magnesium is important for sleep, so make sure you're getting enough in your diet – green leafy vegetables, wholegrains, nuts, seeds and legumes are all great sources	Large portions or heavily spiced foods just prior to bed  A high fat diet, as this will generally impact sleep quality, which is just as important as sleep duration

## AT A GLANCE

In summary, the key nutrition messages for supporting your health, energy, sleep and wellbeing when working shifts are:

- Eat nutritious meals and snacks consistently across your shift
- Aim for a source of protein and colourful fibre-rich carb in these meals and snacks
- Nuts, seeds, wholegrain crackers, yogurt and fruit are much better sleep promoting snacks than high fat, high salt processed snack options
- Drink your coffee and caffeinated tea in the **first half of your shift** then switch to caffeine-free options
- Reach for a glass of milk over a glass of wine in your bed wind down

