

Dietary Strategies For Night Shift

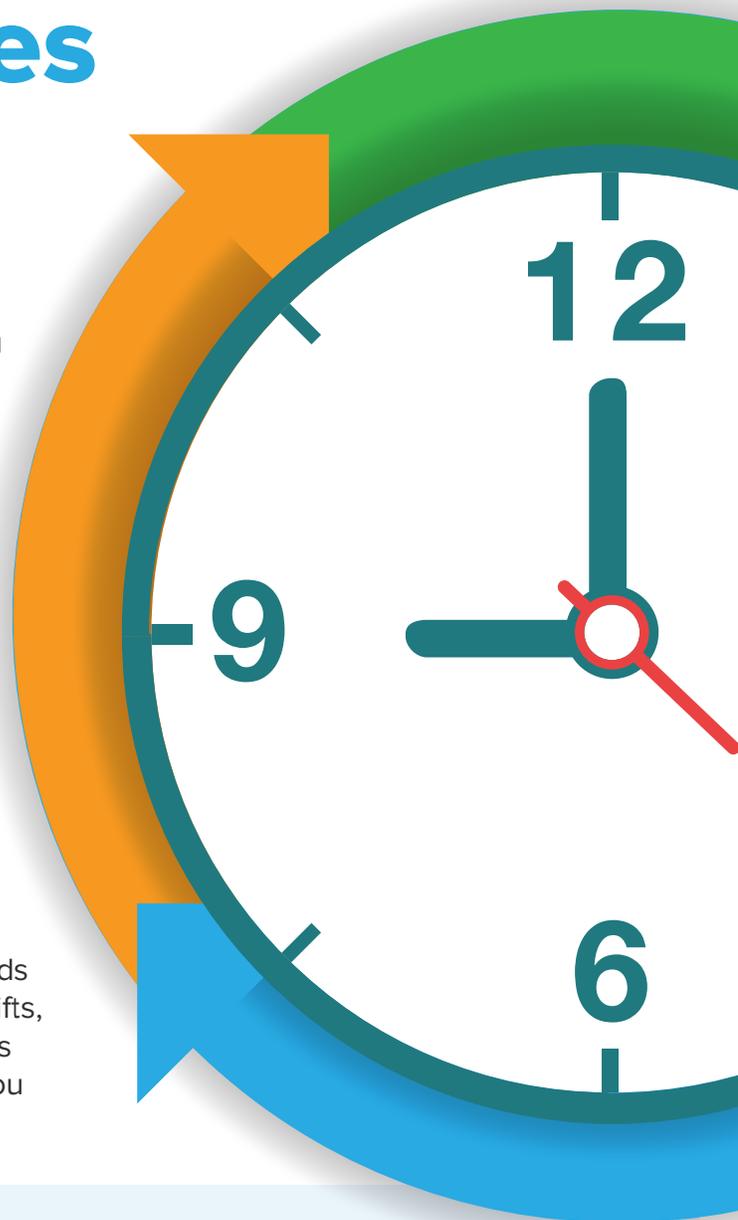
Shift work can affect your health by interfering with your “internal body clock”, known as the circadian rhythm. As digestion slows down in the evening and overnight, what you eat may be out of sync with what your body can process. Fat won’t clear from the blood stream as efficiently and blood sugars will not regulate appropriately. That is why some foods that you tolerate well during the day may trouble you if you have them late at night.

Research shows people who work night shift have an increased risk of digestive issues including heart burn, reflux disease, indigestion, diarrhea, constipation, chronic fatigue and weight gain. Thankfully there are some dietary strategies that can help reduce and/or prevent these health concerns.

Try to stick to the daytime meal timings as close as possible.

Unless your job is very physically active, research recommends limiting eating between 12:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. On night shifts, continue to follow typical daytime timing for meals as much as possible. Start with the next meal or snack closest to when you wake up.

- Start with a snack in the afternoon after waking.
- Make dinner your largest meal of the day around 5-6 p.m. This allows you to still eat this meal with your family if possible.
- Have a snack in the evening and a lighter lunch around midnight.
- If needed, add a small snack at 2-3 a.m.
- Finish off with a light breakfast before going to bed (6-7 a.m.) that has a balance of protein and carbohydrates. To improve the quality of your sleep, make sure you are not too full or too hungry.



Below is a sample of how your day might change between day shift and night shift.

Day Shift		Night shift	
Wake up time	6:00 a.m.	Wake up time	3:00 p.m.
Breakfast	7:00 a.m.	Snack	3:30 p.m.
Snack	9:30 a.m.	Dinner	6:00 p.m.
Lunch	12:00 p.m.	Snack	8:30 p.m.
Snack	3:00 p.m.	Light lunch	11:00 p.m.
Dinner	6:00 p.m.	Snack (if needed)	2:00 - 3:00 a.m.
Bed	9:00 - 10:00 p.m.	Light breakfast	6:00 a.m.
		Bed	7:00 a.m.

Please note, these are general suggestions. For more specific recommendations, connect with a My Viva Plan dietitian.

5 tips to stay energized and alert while on night shift:

01 Stay hydrated

- Dehydration can leave you feeling tired and increase your cravings for high-fat, high-salt, high-sugar foods.
- Remember that by the time you feel thirsty you are likely already dehydrated. Keep a water bottle close by and drink regularly throughout your shift.

02 Choose protein for a “pick-me-up”

- A snack containing protein will provide sustained energy and help keep you alert for when your body is programmed for sleep.

03 Stay active

- Light exercise before or midway through your shift will provide energy, improve your mood and help you sleep better.
- Limit exercising right before sleep as it can delay the onset of melatonin, the hormone responsible for making you feel sleepy.

04 Avoid high-fat, fried & sugar-laden foods

- Fatty or fried food can cause indigestion or heartburn.
- Foods high in sugar may give you a short burst of energy, but can ultimately leave you feeling sluggish.

05 Cut down on caffeine

- Caffeine stays in your system for up to eight hours which can make it difficult to fall asleep later.
- It's best to have caffeinated drinks (coffee/tea) before work or early in your shift.