

Health Advice for Shift Workers

It has long been recognised that people who work shifts, especially night shifts, are more prone to certain health conditions due to the changes in their body clock leading to reduced rest, changes in eating habits, taking less physical exercise and having less social interaction with family and friends.

Below are some hints and tips that can improve the physical and social health of colleagues who work shifts across unsocial hours.

The Feeling First Class portal has helpful support content for your mental and physical health. Visit www.feelingfirstclass.co.uk (code **FFC1** to register) and download the app from iTunes or the Google Play store.

Call the First Class Support helpline on **0800 688 8777**, visit www.rmgfirstclasssupport.co.uk or download the 'Lifeworks' app. New users are required to 'sign up' using a unique invitation code, which is 'RMG-' and their payroll number, for example **RMG-12345678**.

Additionally, the NHS have a range of support materials available. Visit www.nhs.co.uk/live-well for help with improving your diet and increasing physical activity; lowering your blood pressure or cholesterol; or support with losing weight or stopping smoking.

Also available is a How Are You quiz, an online Heart Age test or you can download useful health apps and trackers via www.nhs.co.uk/apps-library.

<p>Sleep</p> <p>Try to get 7-8 hours sleep a day. We all need sleep to rest and repair the body, however sometimes a good days / night sleep is difficult.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a quiet room as your bedroom, where there is least disturbance from outside and internal noise. • Use heavy curtains, blackout blinds or eye shades to darken the bedroom as much as possible. • Relax by reading or listening to music before bed. • Have a shower or bath before bed. • Avoid drinking caffeine or other stimulants a few hours before going to sleep. • Limit alcohol intake, as it can reduce the quality of sleep. 	<p>Diet</p> <p>We all need food for energy however certain foods can impact on helping us stay alert or sleep when we need to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat regular light meals as heavy meals can cause drowsiness. • Avoid fatty foods as they are more difficult to digest. • Choose foods that are easily digestible such as pasta, rice, bread, fruit and vegetables. • Avoid sugary foods, which provide a short energy boost, but then cause a dip in energy levels. • Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.
<p>Physical Activity</p> <p>Physical activity can help with sleep as well as weight management. In addition, it has been proven that there is a strong link between good physical health and good mental health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 30 minutes daily exercise is recommended and this can be split into two if necessary. • Exercise can be as simple and inexpensive as a walk, jog, cycle, or exercising at home. • Swimming is good as you use most of the muscle groups and your joints are supported by the surrounding water. • It is recommended that physical activity is carried out with a friend or colleague as it leads to improved social interactions. 	<p>Social Interaction</p> <p>We all need it to keep up to date with family and friends, and it's also good for our mental health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your family and friends know about how shift work affects you. If they understand the problems, they can be more supportive. • Let them know your shift schedule well in advance. This means that social and family activities can be planned around your shift schedule. • Get involved with family activities such as meals, household chores, sport and going out together. • Try to carry out some social activities with work colleagues who share similar shift schedules to you.