

STEP 4 Manage Stress, Enjoy Yourself

Relax. Try visualization: Picture the sights, sounds, smells and feelings of a peaceful place. Practice deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation: Starting with your head and working down to your feet, tense and relax each muscle group.

Use your vacation time. Time off can boost your motivation, morale and happiness — all of which work toward success.

Have more fun. Make time for leisure and favorite activities. Play a sport. Read a book or magazine. Watch a favorite film.

Make time for family and friendships. Get to know others who share and understand your schedule. Suggest to non-shiftworking friends activities that fit your schedule and lifestyle.

Help family time fit into your schedule. **Examples:** Have breakfast with your partner when you get home from work, or meet the kids after school before your shift starts.



REMEMBER:

Stress is your body's response to external events. Perhaps you can't change some situations, but you can focus on ways to adapt, alter or avoid stressors as much as possible. Sometimes the quickest way to relieve stress is to change your expectations.

Keep worries in check. Don't dwell on your to-do list. Immerse yourself in the activity at hand, even if you're doing nothing at all. Is a difficult decision or problem weighing on your mind? Get worries off your chest by writing them down and putting them away. Pick a "resolution" date to address issues, and then move on.



More Healthy Choices for Your Days and Nights

Maintain regular eating patterns. Eat slowly and relax during meals.

Bring leftovers. Prepare and package healthy home-cooked meals consisting of small portions to take to work.

Watch your caffeine. Heavy coffee consumption can produce negative side effects such as stomach irritation and sleep loss. **Better:** Green tea contains just 20 to 30 mg of caffeine per 8-ounce cup, significantly less than coffee, and can give you a lift too.

Drink plenty of water. Even mild dehydration can make you feel tired and run down.

Get regular checkups.

No matter what kind of work schedule you keep, see your health care provider for regular checkups and preventive screenings as recommended for your age and health condition.

Don't drive when you're drowsy. It's better to take a short nap first (about 20 minutes) before getting on the road.

Ask for help. You can only push yourself so hard, especially when you combine a challenging work schedule with heavy responsibilities on the home front. **Tips:** Plan ahead ... delegate what you can ... lighten the load ... let go of the nonessential.

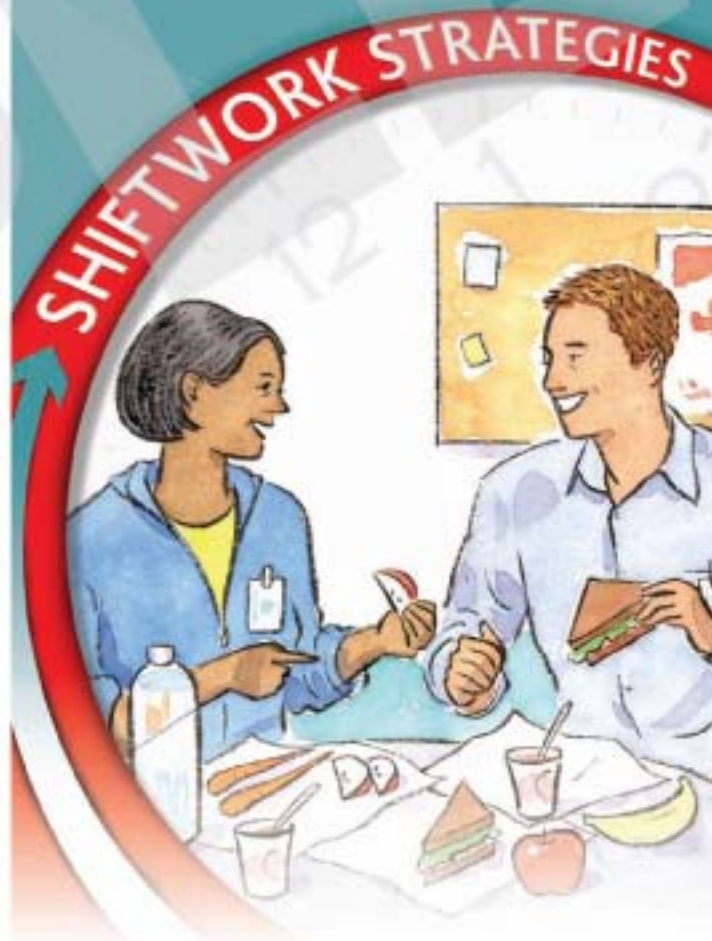
Check your mood. If emotions are keeping you down for a period of two weeks or longer, talk to your health care provider about depression.

Final thought: Feeling your best anytime, day or night, starts by taking good care of yourself. Begin by focusing on daily healthy habits, one day and one step at a time.



Feeling Good on a Shiftwork Schedule

A Healthy Habit Checklist



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Step Up Your Shiftwork Tolerance

Changing work schedules can introduce irregular meal times and new sleep patterns, affecting your energy, mood, weight and even digestion. Help your body shift gears better with healthy habits.

4 STEPS FOR FEELING GOOD

- 1 Eat right:** Good nutrition helps with energy, overall wellness and weight management. Eat fruits, vegetables and whole grains; low-fat or fat-free dairy products; and limited amounts of lean meat, poultry and fish. **The key:** For shiftworkers, it's when and what you eat that counts.
- 2 Get physically active:** If a regular exercise routine is too hard to fit into your hectic schedule, find ways to be physically active in general. Walk around the neighborhood with your kids, play soccer or touch football in the backyard or a nearby park, or wash and wax your car. Just avoid vigorous exercise within 3-4 hours before bedtime.
- 3 Sleep:** One of the biggest challenges for shiftworkers is getting good sleep regularly. Some sleep loss is common, but ongoing sleep deprivation is a risk to your health and safety. Use good sleep habits to improve your sleep.
- 4 Manage stress:** There's no way to totally shut out stress. **Best bets:** Learn and practice relaxation techniques, exercise to relieve tension and add more fun to your life.

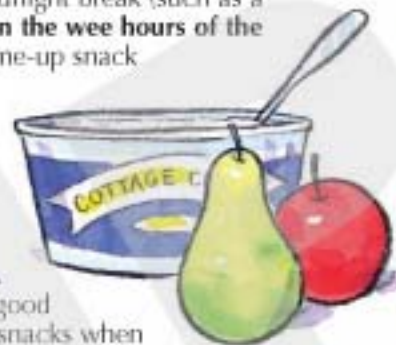
The good news is that all these areas are within your control. Shiftwork can be a normal and enjoyable way of life. It's all in the choices you make day to day. Read on.



STEP 1 Eat Smart

Making the right food choices at meal times can satisfy your hunger, and boost your energy and alertness (or promote sleep) when you need it. **Smart starts:**

Time your meals. If you go to work in the afternoon, have your main meal in the middle of the day, not during the middle of your shift. If you work nights, eat your main meal before your shift starts, at a regular dinner time and no later than about 7 p.m. Then, snack lightly during the night shift and eat a small meal on your midnight break (such as a roast beef sandwich). In the wee hours of the morning, have a pick-me-up snack such as a slice of whole-wheat bread with peanut butter, or low-fat cottage cheese with fruit.



Eat for energy when you need it.

Protein-rich foods are good choices for meals and snacks when you need to stay alert and keep your energy up. **Ideas:** a hard-boiled egg with whole-wheat crackers and a vegetable ... sandwiches or meals made with lean meats ... meat substitutes such as tofu ... plain popcorn or a small serving of trail mix, nuts or seeds.

Eat for sleep when you need it. Meals high in carbohydrates and low in protein promote sleepiness. When you're settling down for sleep, eat a small, light meal such as breakfast cereal or a turkey sandwich. **Remember:** Caffeine works against good sleep. Avoid it for at least four hours before bedtime.

Watch out. Avoid heavy meals, fast food and sugary, high-fat snacks from vending machines. These foods can add extra calories with little nutrition, lead to indigestion and bring on drowsiness when you need it least.

STOCK UP ON WHOLESOME FOODS

Buy whole-wheat breads, pitas and crackers; low-fat cheeses; almonds; fruits and vegetables, fresh or canned (choose unsweetened or low-sodium); 100% fruit juice or vegetable juice; and lean meats and cold cuts.

STEP 2 Get More Physical Activity

Exercise boosts energy, helps you relax later on and helps you manage your weight. Physical activity in general and/or a 30-minute workout most days of the week can reduce your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and other chronic health conditions. And at the very least, it helps you feel good! **Three ways to start and stick with it:**

1. Exercise **before** work and other obligations settle in.
2. **During breaks**, walk a lap around the building or climb the stairs (always keep safety in mind outdoors at night). Try resistance bands or small hand weights for strength training.
3. **Team up** with a co-worker for motivation

STEP 3 Sleep to Rest and Recharge

Not being able to sleep at night or to sleep well during the day brings on sleep deficit. Over time, that can contribute to insomnia, excessive sleepiness and chronic fatigue. A good sleep routine and a sleep-friendly environment can help you get the shut-eye you really need. **Sleep tips:**

- Keep a **regular sleep schedule** as much as possible.
- Use **blackout shades** to make your room especially dark if you sleep during the day.
- Run a fan or white noise machine or wear earplugs to help **prevent sleep interruptions** due to noise. And keep your room cool.
- Make sure friends and loved ones know about your **do-not-disturb time** while you're sleeping.



BEAT FATIGUE

Stretch, jog in place, do jumping jacks or climb some stairs when you're dragging ... brush your teeth with minty toothpaste ... drink a glass of ice-cold water.