

SW SHIFT WORKER™

Achieving a Healthy Balance.

Alliant
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

07.2020

Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information visit [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov).

Tame Your Food Environment

The food you see impacts whether you eat healthfully or overindulge. Research from Cornell University found people are three times more likely to grab the first item they see in their kitchen than the fifth one, for example. You can change your food environment, even on the night shift or when you're eating alone. Here's how:



Fill your grocery cart with whole, minimally processed foods, such as vegetables, fruits, plain yogurt, whole grains, lean meats, legumes and nuts. Then, place these items front and center in your refrigerator and pantry so you see them first when you are hungry.

Banish the treat bowl. Instead of placing a bowl of candy or cookies on your table or desk, keep crunchy raw vegetables, whole-grain crackers, air-popped popcorn or fruit handy.

Have a healthy break. Rather than diving into the proverbial box of doughnuts, enjoy fresh fruit or vegetables with hummus or a low-fat yogurt dip.

Put the container out of sight. Take your single slice of pizza someplace else to eat, instead of consuming it next to the box. Get a single portion of a snack, then put the rest away before you start eating. Taking a food out of your visual field can keep you from reaching for more.

SECRETS OF Summer Slumber

Summer presents challenges for daytime sleepers. The days are longer, so people you live with may be active longer. Plus, rising temperatures may warm your bedroom so sleeping isn't so comfortable. Take steps so you get the sleep you need for successful shiftwork.

- ➔ **Research shows people sleep best in a cool room that is below 70°F.** Opening your windows can let in the heat. Instead, keep windows closed and covered with dark blinds, and circulate air with a ceiling fan or large upright fan.
- ➔ **Closed windows help block outside noise.** Try using a fan, air conditioner, white noise machine or even a radio turned down low to provide white noise to mask background sounds that might disturb your sleep. If you can sleep with earplugs, use them.
- ➔ **Manage your health.** Allergens such as pollen escalate in the summer months. If allergies keep you awake, discuss treatment with your health care provider. Over-the-counter antihistamines and steroid sprays can help relieve symptoms.
- ➔ **Stay on schedule.** The fine weather and extended daylight can tempt you to skimp on sleep. Enjoy your free time, but remember work and play are more pleasurable if you are well rested.



Stress showing up on your body?

Gaining weight and abdominal fat are linked to high levels of the hormone cortisol, which is released during emotional tension. Cortisol levels also may increase with caffeine use, sleep deprivation and viral infections. Also, stress can lead to overeating unhealthy foods. The right diet and physical activity can help control weight — but first try reducing chronic stress.

A Household Primer for Shiftworkers

When you work shifts, communication and household management can be especially challenging. Create a more efficient household by getting everyone involved.

Choose your goals for home management. These might include:

- Getting your family to help out more.
- Having a cleaner house.
- Planning dinners a week ahead.
- Spending less time running errands.
- Tackling a big project, such as cleaning out the garage.

Your whole household should work together to keep your home running smoothly. Once you have a good system, you shouldn't have to worry about the home front when you're working your shift or trying to sleep.

Schedule household duties and responsibilities at the beginning of each week or month, so you don't have to scramble to make a daily schedule or act like the air traffic controller for your family — it's all on the chart. Even if you're at work or sleeping, the household should still run smoothly.

Split tasks into those that must be done daily, weekly and monthly. Some home organization experts also recommend assigning a household area to each day of the week for cleaning and restocking. Try to assign tasks in 20-minute chunks.



Set rules for electronic communications. Let your family know when it's appropriate and inappropriate to text or call you at work, for example. Texting and emailing can be great family communication tools, particularly when you all follow different schedules. But be sure to set boundaries so they don't become intrusive.

Stay Safe on Your Shift



Shiftwork requires going against your body's natural rhythms.

However, that doesn't mean you need to compromise your safety or the safety of your workplace to work shifts. Review these guidelines to avoid injury, manage fatigue and work well while staying safe.

- ✓ Don't skip your scheduled break. Taking time to rest, eat and move around during your shift is key to staying alert and safe.
- ✓ If possible, alternate between tasks to help you stay alert and focused.
- ✓ Set a sleep-wake schedule, and stick to it. Give sleep the priority it deserves.
- ✓ Follow all safety procedures, use your personal protective equipment (PPE) and protect yourself.
- ✓ If you feel too tired to work safely or experience brain fog, slowed reaction time, severe irritability, forgetting the last few minutes of work or nodding off while doing repetitive tasks, take a break or tell a supervisor.
- ✓ If you experience a safety-related incident on the job or notice unsafe behavior in a coworker, speak up. Everyone's well-being depends on working together to avoid mishaps on their shifts.

Walk Away From Food Cravings

Shiftwork may lead to fatigue and sleep loss, which in turn can trigger strong cravings for foods high in fat, sugar and sodium. Giving in to cravings may help you feel better in the short term, but over time this behavior leads to weight gain and doesn't do anything to alleviate stress or fatigue.

Can't get food off your mind? Extra physical activity can help you refocus. Try walking for 15 minutes. Get up and move around; do some chores. Play with your kids.

Other benefits include reducing stress, boosting mood, managing weight and reducing fatigue — all of which have longer-lasting benefits than a candy bar.



The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, **Cool Meals for Hot Days**, is at personalbest.com/extras/20V7tools.

7.2020