

SHIFT WORK STRATEGIES

Shift work is hard on the body because it disrupts your circadian rhythm. But can what and when you eat help?

Whether you're a flight attendant, a nurse or a miner, studies show that shift work, especially at night, is linked with increased insulin resistance, a higher body mass index, more digestive problems, lowered immunity and depression. Longer term, shift work can raise the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, cancer, heart attack and stroke.

how nutrition can help

Research on chronobiology (the study of circadian or body rhythms) has shown that you have at least 20 "clocks" in your body that need to stay synchronised for optimum health and wellbeing. These clocks are located in your genes and they coordinate "team-work" ranging from your intestines to your liver and brain. Eating late at night, especially refined carbohydrate foods, disrupts these body clocks; unlike rats, we're designed to consume food during the day. Everyone is more insulin sensitive in the morning and more insulin resistant at night.

eating tips

- ▶ Eat three meals at regular times over a 24-hour period. Eating at irregular times can upset your body clocks. If you work nights, eat your dinner later in the afternoon or early evening, have only a light midnight meal of vegetable soup or salad (avoid iron-rich foods like meat) and end with a hearty breakfast. The clock in your liver regulates blood glucose levels. Eating iron-rich foods at night may make your liver clock get out of sync with the master clock in your brain.
- ▶ Plan your meals ahead. On your days off, cook in bulk and freeze portions. Eating right can help reset a disturbed circadian clock system. Base meals on high-fibre plant foods such as legumes, barley, vegetables, nuts and seeds. Think dhal on a bed of fluffy quinoa or a mixed bean salad.
- ▶ Avoid processed foods containing refined starches and sugars, such as biscuits and chips. While these may give you a temporary boost, they can disrupt your body clocks, particularly if they're eaten late at night.
- ▶ Hydrate yourself well. Drink plenty of water in between meals and avoid alcohol.



GREEK-STYLE PEA STEW WITH MINT

A traditional Greek recipe known as *ara-ka*, highlighting the central role of tenderly cooked peas as a main meal.

PREPARATION TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOKING TIME: 50 MINUTES (27 WITH PRESSURE COOKER) **SERVES 6**

Ingredients:

- 6 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 2 tbsp ground paprika
- 140 g tomato paste
- 1 kg packet frozen peas
- 1 medium carrot, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 tsp salt
- Leaves from 1 bunch fresh mint (20 g)

Method:

1. Heat the oil in a saucepan or pressure cooker and sauté the onion for about 5 minutes until softened, then stir in paprika and tomato paste.
2. Add the peas, carrot, garlic, salt, mint and 2 cups of water to the saucepan, and stir well. When contents come to a boil, turn down heat and simmer, covered, for about 50 minutes or until peas are very tender. If cooking with pressure cooker, use 1½ cups of water instead, cover with lid and bring to pressure then turn down heat to very low and cook for 2 minutes under high pressure. Allow for natural pressure release before opening the lid.
3. Serve hot or cold with wholegrain rice or bread, and a dollop of low-fat Greek-style yoghurt, dairy-free yoghurt or feta cheese.

PER SERVE: 1338 kJ (320 cal). Protein 12 g. Total fat 19 g. Saturated fat 3 g. Carbohydrate 17 g. Cholesterol 0 mg. Calcium 81 mg. Iron 4 mg. Fibre 16 g.

