

So you work in hospo? Chances are you work shift work!

What is shift work?

While the traditional 9:00am - 5:00pm working day is no longer as prolific as it once was, shift work remains the norm for many working in hospitality. Shift work is not just work that starts before 8:00am or finishes after 6:00pm, it is work where the work hours cause a change in your normal sleep patterns.

Shift work is one of the leading causes of fatigue as it requires you to work when your body would normally be at rest.

However you're not alone - our whanau working in trucking, DHB nurses, factories, and the NZ Police are all likely to do shift work at some stage.

What are the risks associated with doing shift work?

ACCIDENTS

Shift work increases the risk in the workplace if you are tired - this means risk not only to you, but to your co-workers. The urge to sleep increases in the early hours of the morning and again at mid-afternoon, making these high-risk times for fatigue-related accidents.

HEALTH RISKS

Working irregular patterns, especially shifts at night, takes a toll on the body. Shift workers can develop a condition known as shift work sleep disorder, which symptoms include insomnia, excessive sleepiness and headaches.

This why managing your shift wellness is so critical!

Here are FIVE things you can improve to remain shift ready!

Eat well and exercise consistently

Sleep at night (when you can!)

Restful home environment

Avoid sleeping medications and alcohol

Find the 'hacks' that work for you!

1

Eat well and exercise consistently

Eating well and exercising consistently are priority for all wellness and wellbeing goals. This is no different for maintaining shift wellness. Be active everyday - it can be as simple as a 30 minute walk. Have quality meals, at roughly the same time everyday (which will help your digestive system), and restrict your intake of caffeine in the house before you go to bed - this might mean no more post-shift espresso martini!

2

Sleep at night (when or if you can!)

After you have worked a shift, sleep just enough to feel refreshed, and try to maintain a night sleeping regime where possible.

3

Create a restful home environment

Retreating home is one of the most satisfying after a long shift, make sure your home is one you want to go to. Tell your whanau or flatmates of your shift schedule and discuss routines that work for everyone. Keep your bedroom cool and dark - a calm environment will help quality rest. Try to avoid blue light immediately before going to sleep (so try using the Sleepmode on your phone if you have it!). It is also important to keep a routine for waking up - just as non-shift workers do.

4

Avoid sleeping medications and alcohol

Any discussions around sleeping medication or alcohol being utilised to help post-shift rest should be with your GP. Medication can lead to abnormal sleep patterns and may be addictive, while drinking alcohol can disturb the quality of your sleep.

5

Find the 'hacks' that work for you!

Creating the ultimate environment to help you wind down and rest following your shift can be a bit of trial and error. Some people require dead silence, others like a bit of background noise. You can read a book, take a bath, use lavender oils or drink chamomile tea. There are many home remedies that work - try them all as part of a post-shift routine and find what works for you.

For more visit: www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living/s/sleep-shift-work