

# SHIFTING THE BALANCE

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A guide for shift  
workers in NHS Lothian



Edinburgh & Lothians  
Health Foundation



## Foreword

I suspect that most of you spend much more time thinking about how you care for your patients' health and wellbeing than you do thinking about how you can care for your own health, happiness and safety. Many of us work in highly pressured environments with a seemingly never ending growth in demand and expectations. And for very many of you, this work context can include the additional issue of shift working, looking after patients and their relatives over the 24 hour day, 7 day week and 365 day year.

I want to thank you for all that you do to look after our population over this 24/7/365 timescale. I also want to encourage you to spend a little time to think about your own health and wellbeing, and to read and use the content of this booklet to help you with some strategies to manage the pressures that come with regular shift working. I hope you find it helpful. Thanks again for all that you do.

Calum Campbell

*Chief Executive, NHS Lothian.*

A huge thank you to colleagues in Occupational Health, ER/HR, Partnership, Medical and Nursing Management and staff who kindly took the time to provide us with constructive feedback and comments which helped us arrive at producing this booklet.

Thank you also to Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation who funded the printing of this booklet and the commissioning of illustrations; done by David Galletly ([davidgalletly.com](http://davidgalletly.com)).

## Note from the Authors

This booklet has been designed as a source of up-to-date information and a guide with strategies to help you manage the risks of shift working. You may wish to dip in and out of it, using the personal workbook sections that you feel are relevant to you. Different things may be helpful and/or relevant at different times in your career. This booklet does not replace or reduce the legal, moral and ethical requirement of NHS Lothian to create a safe and healthy workplace and work schedule for you.

Knowledge and understanding of the subjects covered in the booklet in relation to shift work has increased substantially in recent years. While more specific and detailed understanding continues to be investigated, the importance of managing the known potential risks of working shifts remains essential.

We hope you find this a useful aid in your journey to becoming the healthiest, happiest and safest you possible. Share this with others and see how the benefits multiply.

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October 2021

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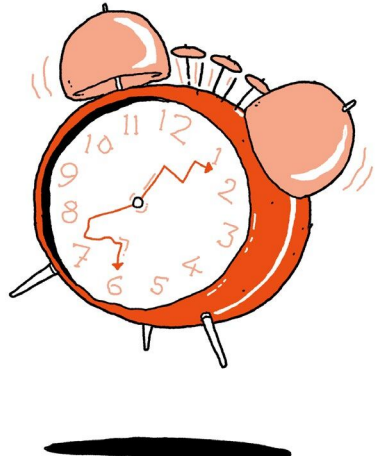
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Shift work can cause a real strain on the body and mind. There are many factors which may contribute to pressure and fatigue on shift, making it harder to perform or be at our best. At NHS Lothian we are committed to ensuring our staff are safe, happy and healthy at work. It is in the interest of staff, patients and the organisation that shifts are managed well.

With your health in mind, we have put together this handy resource to help you understand the health effects of shift working; and provide tried and tested suggestions on how to successfully manage your health and wellbeing while working them.



**Activity:** Can you think of positive and negative effects of shift working on your health, lifestyle or safety?

Positives	Negatives

## 2. CHALLENGES OF SHIFT WORKING

It is important to manage shift work to minimise the risks to your health. Key research indicates that shift work has many consequences for your health and wellbeing. Shift work can lead to outcomes such as:

### Short term:

- Fatigue and sleeplessness
- GI upset
- Headache
- Gritty eyes

### Longer term:

- Fatigue and sleeplessness
- Obesity and weight management troubles
- Cardiovascular disease
- Type II diabetes
- Musculoskeletal problems or injury
- Risk of depression, anxiety and burnout

International and National research findings suggest the best way to reduce such risk is to address shift patterns and working hours. A study conducted in NHS Lothian in 2019 reached the same conclusions. Nurses working long and consecutive shifts reported high levels of burnout and lower work satisfaction. The outcome of the study yielded recommendations on how to make the workplace more safe and conducive to good health. These results were in keeping with external research outcomes and are applicable to anyone working these schedules, not only nursing staff.

## Our best advice to you (and Rota Managers)

- Ensure adequate sleeping hours and days off, as these are protective factors against burnout.
- Where possible, adopt a work schedule that varies the number of consecutive shifts, and the length of shifts, and which minimises the number of consecutive extended shifts (>12hrs). Highlight to your manager if you feel there may be rostering problems.
- If on rotating shifts the direction should be forward, i.e. earlies, lates, nights.
- Promote a workplace culture that allows healthy and safe choices; respect colleague off-days; prompt early departure at the end of shift, and; do not create an expectation that staff work non-contractual overtime.
- Where you have choice on shifts, challenge the pros and cons when deciding if multiple, consecutive day, long (>10hrs) shifts are truly good for your health and wellbeing. Consider the long term health consequences adopting this shift pattern may have on you.

While NHS Lothian is taking steps to put measures in place to address shift patterns, this booklet offers you support and guidance on the best strategies to look after your health, from small everyday changes, to achieving effective long term positive health behaviour change.

### 3. TIPS TO MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE AND GET THE BEST FOR YOURSELF

Fatigue is often the result of working long and consecutive shifts. Making small and achievable changes to aspects of your sleep, eating, drinking and exercise habits can bring many benefits to your work and personal life by reducing fatigue. Check out our tips in this guide.

#### What is fatigue?

Fatigue is experienced differently by everyone. In general, people experience extreme tiredness from mental and physical exertion, which can affect the way you think and feel. Fatigue can lead to slower reactions, underestimation of risk and decreased awareness.



*Shift work is recognised as a risk factor for becoming fatigued at work<sup>(1)</sup>. Accidents and injuries are higher on night shifts, consecutive shifts and*

#### **Fatigue is generally caused by:**

- *Having inadequate amounts of sleep or quality of sleep, over an extended time.*
- *High levels of mental and/or physical exertion over time without adequate rest.*

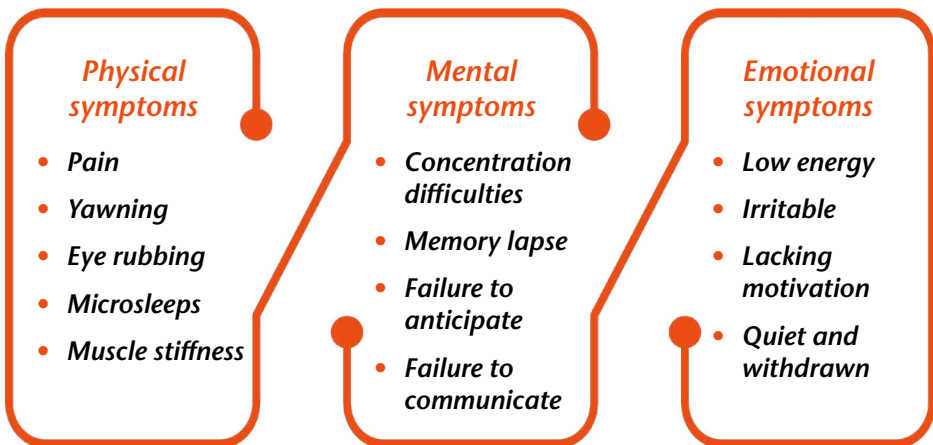
long shifts with inadequate breaks (HSE, 2018); for example, errors in patient care, needle stick injuries and road traffic accidents<sup>(2)</sup>. Luckily there are many ways to minimise the risk of fatigue. By making small changes to your eating, recovery periods and work-life balance, you can create a safer environment at work for yourself, patients and colleagues, as well as improve your energy and enjoyment in life outside of work.

## Factors which may be contributing to your fatigue:

Work related factors	Non-work related factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extended hours of working</li><li>• Shift work</li><li>• Inadequate time between shifts</li><li>• Working extra bank shifts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Long commute times</li><li>• Poor health and fitness levels</li><li>• Many family and social responsibilities</li><li>• Commitment to community activities</li><li>• Emotional stress</li></ul>

**Activity:** Circle any of the physical, mental or emotional symptoms which you have experienced now or in the past. Reflect on these symptoms and the ways they have impacted your work and home life.

## Effects of fatigue



## High risk times for fatigue

It is important to understand the risks associated with fatigue when making decisions regarding working hours, overtime, planning and providing emergency response. This is particularly important because at certain times risks associated with fatigue are much higher:

- In the hours of night shift; this is the lowest point in the circadian rhythm of alertness and performance.
- At handover times, fatigue will affect communication levels.
- If you don't take breaks, fatigue will accumulate.
- Starting before 6am, people can become anxious about getting up on time and 'clock watch', meaning they are fatigued before coming to work.
- When moving between wards or starting a new job, staff tend to not rest well, as they are still adjusting to a new routine.

Keep this information in mind for future decisions and at review meetings when discussing performance and wellbeing.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*Melatonin is a natural hormone which helps to regulate the sleep wake cycle. Production of this hormone is suppressed by blue light from gadgets, therefore disrupting sleep. Blue tint glasses can help stave off some blue light.*

## Get to know the rhythm of your body

Understanding the quirks and whims of your body is very helpful, so you know how to look after yourself when shift working. Your body is hard-wired to work in rhythmic patterns which regulate your biological processes (temperature, hormones, appetite, and sleep) and your psychological state (cognitive performance, behaviour, alertness). Working in shifts can throw these patterns off, particularly when you are working a late or night shift. These shifts disrupt the smooth operation of your circadian rhythm – for example when you work at night, your body is trying to shut down.

The control system of these rhythms – your body clock – tells the body to fall asleep or wake up. The body clock also responds to environmental cues which play a part in regulating the body. For example, the light and dark cycle, our knowledge of the time of day and the social cues in our environment, influence regulation. Most work and social activities take place during the day light hours and rest and inactivity in the hours of darkness. Shift work and night shift is asking your body to do the opposite.

While you are working night shift your body clock is actively shutting your body down. At night your sleep and repair hormones peak and your digestive system processes reduce. After your night shift when you are trying to sleep, these functions do the opposite – your body is trying

### **TOP TIP**

*Avoid using mobiles/tablets/pc/or watching TV  
in the 45 minutes before going to bed.*

*This allows the brain to prepare for sleep.*

*Apple devices have a 'night shift' mode.*

*This reduces the blue light emitted.*

to prepare for the day. This conflict in the body, or fighting its natural rhythm, contributes to fatigue. It might come as no surprise to you that when you wake from day time sleep you feel unrefreshed.

The nature of health care means support needs to be provided round the clock and night shifts are unavoidable. It is important that we offer you the right support to implement healthy coping strategies to help minimise the impact this may have on your health.

Your individual response to the effects of shift work is largely down to you and your personal circumstances. Your personality, attitude, coping behaviours, social support and environment around you will influence how you experience shift work. There is also increasing evidence that whether you are a “night owl” or a “morning lark” chronotype will influence how you cope with different shift schedules; i.e. night owls cope better with late shifts and night shifts while morning larks manage better with early shifts and day shifts. As we age we become, in general, more like morning larks, so may fair better with early or day shifts. Not everyone will experience the consequences of shift work in an impactful or debilitating way. However, it is important to be aware of the risks associated with shift work in order to make informed choices to protect your current and long term health and wellbeing.

## Sleep, rest and recovery

The nature of health care professionals is to provide unfaltering care to patients. It is equally important to provide this level of care to oneself.

**Most people need one hour's sleep for every two hours awake; roughly eight to nine hours each night.** Shift workers tend to sleep less than this, resulting in a reduced sleep quality and building up a 'sleep debt.' It is important to repay the sleep debt and to do so quickly after the debt is incurred. Sleep debt accumulates more in those who sleep during the day. Day time sleep is of lower quality than night time sleep, meaning you may miss out on much needed restorative sleep. At times it may not seem possible to repay this debt, due to family responsibilities coupled with long shift patterns. However, it is important to protect and maximise the time you do have for recovery in order to repay the debt and gain quality sleep<sup>(3)</sup>.



## How you can protect and maximise your sleep

- At home, create an environment conducive to sleep. Avoid blue light from television, tablets, laptops and phones. Consider buying blackout curtains which will minimise the daylight in your bedroom. If other family members are listening to audios, remind them to keep volume low or to wear headphones.
- After a night shift, wear wraparound sunglasses on your commute home. This will help the body become less aware of daylight.
- Limit your caffeine intake from tea, coffee and fizzy drinks as this can affect your sleep quality. While caffeine can act as a mild stimulant, refrain from consuming around 4-6 hours before the end of your shift. Your daily maximum intake is 400mg (3-5 cups).
- Avoid eating foods which are heavy and calorically dense, as this can make it more difficult to sleep. If you feel hungry don't ignore your body. Eat a light wholegrain snack, which is easy for your body to digest.
- If you are in bed and struggling to sleep after 30 minutes do an activity to distract yourself. Go to another room and listen to soothing music, read a book under dim light or take a bath. When you start to feel tired, return to bed and try again. Try not to get stressed that you can't sleep, as this can make sleeping more difficult.



### QUESTION?

*What realistic improvements could you make to your environment in order to maximise your sleep?*

**Activity:** My better sleep plans are:



## Napping and preparation for the night shift

It is important to break the build-up of fatigue where possible and napping is an effective way to achieve this. Think of napping like a jump start for a car; this will help to get your wheels turning for coming on shift. A pre-shift, two hour nap in the afternoon is very useful for reducing the fatigue which has accumulated throughout the day. This can also help you to remain awake and functional in the low point of the night shift.

### **It is important to maintain a sleeping routine when shift working.**

Napping while at work can also reduce your fatigue<sup>(4)</sup>. Discuss any local arrangements for this with your manager; there is currently no NHS Lothian formal written guidance available.

#### **TRUE OR FALSE**

- 1) Only your biological state is regulated by your body clock.*
- 2) All your body processes speed up at night.*
- 3) You should nap in the afternoon before your shift.*
- 4) Caffeine consumption throughout the night shift is good to keep you alert for the drive home.*

*Answers on page 42*

When you nap, keep light to a minimal and find a comfortable space to nap for 20 minutes. A short nap can be helpful to cope with fatigue; any longer than this can leave you feeling unrefreshed and can also increase errors and misjudgments once awake. When napping, make sure to set an alarm or ask a colleague to prompt you to wake. Allow yourself 10 minutes after you wake to re-orientate yourself before you return to work. When you want to stay awake, increase your exposure to light, as this can improve performance.

Not everyone finds napping helpful. Find out what works for you and do it.

## Self-check:

### How well do you look after yourself post-shift?

Read each statement and score yourself on a scale of 0-5 reflecting how good you are at carrying out each task. Add up your score and check out your result below.

0 ————— 5  
*I am not great at this* *I am great at this*

Rate my recovery	Rating
I charge all my electronic devices outside of the bedroom.	
I remind my family/house mates to be considerate while I am sleeping.	
I avoid heavy foods a few hours before bed.	
I have made my room comfortable for sleeping – black out curtains, good circulation.	
I use an alarm clock rather than my mobile phone alarm.	
I try to maintain a consistent sleep routine.	
I am mindful of the importance of my wellbeing while shift working.	
<b>Total score:</b>	

### Results

- 0-9** *Someone needs a bit more TLC! You may find it helpful to reflect on the rest and recovery tips in this booklet.*
- 10-19** *You are doing really well and have ticked a few off the list. Check back to the tips in this booklet and think what else you can include into your sleep routine.*
- 20-29** *Taking care of yourself is obviously important to you. Just a few more self-care and recovery activities would be perfect for you.*
- 30-35** *You are the master of self-care! Great effort and keep it up.*

## Recovering after your final night shift

You will build up a greater cumulative sleep debt if you have worked consecutive shifts. The quicker you repay this sleep debt, the faster your likely recovery, which can also benefit your long term health.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*Between 2am – 5am digestive enzymes are not produced in the body so food cannot be digested properly. This could leave you feeling sluggish and uncomfortable on shift.*

After your final night shift have a short sleep to reduce some of your fatigue. Try not to sleep too late and plan your day to allow time to carry out your day time duties – socialising, eating, exercising and get some sunlight too.

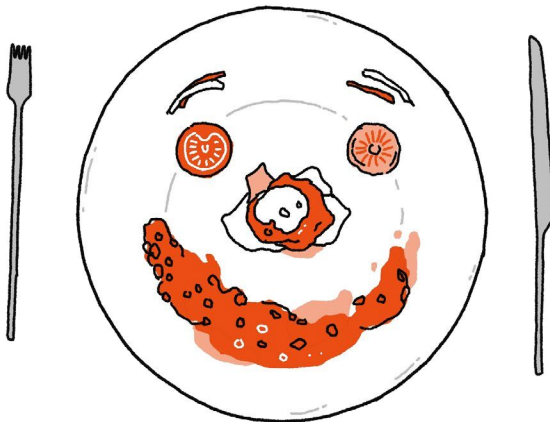
Go to bed early, which will allow you to catch up on a lot of sleep, and if you can have a longer lie-in the next day, then do so. Repeat this routine and aim for early nights, which will help you back into a 'day time' routine and to achieve a normal sleeping pattern.

## Eating and drinking

**It is best to eat your biggest meal before going on shift.**

Have a meal which is high in protein (lean meats, pulses and beans) as these provide a slower release of energy, which will help you to feel fuller for longer. Light meals should be consumed during your shift, such as soup and sandwiches. These foods are easy to digest and can help reduce heartburn and gas (CHSS, 2017). Chocolate and fizzy drinks will give you a quick burst of energy, but will be followed by an energy slump. For a longer and healthier boost, try snacks such as low fat yoghurt, nuts or a bowl of cereal/porridge. Your body will send craving signals, particularly at night time when trying to stay awake. Try to respond to these cravings with healthy choices and avoid fatty and spicy foods, which are harder to digest and can make you feel worse.

Coupling good eating and sleeping habits stand you in good stead for being healthier, fitter and less likely to have problems with your weight and other health issues<sup>(6)</sup>.



**Activity:** Check out the table below, which shows snacks and meals matched with an exercise required to burn the calories. Using the numbers below, can you guess the minutes needed of each exercise?

Food	Exercise to burn calories
1 One slice of Domino's pepperoni pizza (290kcal)	___ minutes of walking
2 Mars Bar (229kcal)	___ minutes of jogging
3 Walker's crisps (184kcal)	___ minutes of dancing
4 Full sugar Coca-Cola can (139kcal)	___ minutes of aerobics class
5 McDonald's Big Mac (540kcal)	___ minutes of walking

26 140 40 60 22

*Answers on page 42*

**TOP TIP**  
*Only an extra 50-100 calories per day will lead to weight gain.*

## Hydration

Drinking water will help digest your food, keep you hydrated and maintain regularity. Dehydration can make you less alert.

When you are low on water, your body tries to conserve what you do have. It does this by reducing activity, therefore making you slow down and become more relaxed and; increasing your chances of falling asleep unintentionally. Being dehydrated may also make you feel lightheaded or dizzy.

### Caffeine

Using the numbers below, match the milligrams of caffeine to each 250ml beverage.

Decaf tea \_\_\_\_\_ (mg)

Green tea \_\_\_\_\_ (mg)

Diet coke (can) \_\_\_\_\_ (mg)

Red bull \_\_\_\_\_ (mg)

Coffee \_\_\_\_\_ (mg)

94 42 8-30 77 2-5

*Answers on page 42*



For regular alcohol drinkers, intake should be kept to a maximum of 14 units per week to reduce the risk of cancers, stroke and liver disease<sup>(7)</sup>.

Try to spread your units out over three days to minimise long term health risks. If you drink on single occasions rather than regularly, try to avoid consuming all 14 units in one go. Enjoy your alcohol with good food and company and keep hydrated with water alongside alcohol.

## Exercise



Since a major part of getting fit and staying fit is consistency, it can feel difficult to commit to this when working shifts. If you can identify when your energy levels are at their highest and if you are able to dedicate 30 minutes to exercise during this time, you have won half the battle.

### **The weekly recommended exercise:**

- *150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity*
- *Strength exercises on two or more days.*

Find an activity which works for you and get creative with the time and resources you do have. Any activity which increases your heart rate, makes you breathless and red in the cheeks will meet the recommendation of 30 minutes per day five times a week, or 150 minutes weekly<sup>(8)</sup>.

Some examples;

## At home

- Grab an exercise DVD or online video and complete a workout in the comfort of your living room.
- During television adverts, pick an exercise to complete until your show resumes. Why not try squats – 20 seconds work x 10 seconds rest repeated – for the duration of the advert.
- To add some strength training, resistance bands are a cheap and safe alternative to using weights.
- If it's a nice night, head to the garden if you have one and have some old school fun with a skipping rope or a hula hoop.

## Gym and exercise classes

- If you are not familiar with a gym, arrange an induction with the gym staff. This will help you to feel confident in navigating the gym and will ensure you are working out safely.

### TOP TIP

*Gyms tend to be cheaper and quieter during the day. Edinburgh Leisure and Excite in West Lothian, offer discounts for NHS Lothian staff.*

- There is often a list of fun exercise classes on offer. Aim for classes that raise your heart rate and are easy on your joints, e.g. Zumba. Bring a friend along and you can have a giggle with each other trying to keep up with the steps!
- There are many other enjoyable activities which don't feel like exercise. Why not try out a trampoline fitness class, join a ceilidh club or an aqua-fit session.
- NHS Lothian health and wellbeing groups organise a variety of classes. You can find more details on the intranet and in your local site bulletins.

## Social and family life

Working shifts can have many pros and cons that impact your family and social life. They can allow you flexibility if you have children who need to be looked after and it can feel that you have more days off if you work long shifts consecutively. This tends to suit the lifestyle of some people. We suggest that you may wish to consider all sides of the coin when deciding if this working pattern is right for you. The thought of four days off in a row after working three can seem great and minimise some logistical problems, however, what we would like our staff to consider is if it is the right choice for your health. Your health and wellbeing also affects your family and friends.

Having healthy relationships with family, partners and friends can be protective for your health, particularly if you are married or in a long term relationship<sup>(9)</sup>. Social support can act as a buffer to stress. Relationships can help manage many stressful life events and daily hassles; whether it's raising a family, coping with illness, getting a mortgage or retirement. Having the opportunity to experience life with those in your social sphere is crucial but at times shift work may not allow the opportunity, which can leave you feeling lonely or out of sync with the world.

Shift work at times will leave you fatigued, moody and not ready to socialise. Self-awareness of how your body and mind can change is important so you can communicate this to your family. Communication can be the key to alleviating relationship difficulties. Try not to assume that everyone will know or remember what is needed to help you to manage how you are feeling after your shift. Even though you have had this conversation once, it may need to take place a few times to act as a gentle reminder; we encourage you to revisit this issue, as your circumstances will continually fluctuate.

In time you will get to understand your body and predict how you might feel when you work certain shift patterns. Work with your family and friends to let them know what they can do to help you along. Could it be doing meal preparation, doing the school run that week or making social plans with your shifts in mind?

## Work with us to make the best environment for you

NHS Lothian strives to create an environment that is healthy and safe for you to work in. By law, morally and ethically we have a responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees. Achieving this is also key to improving patient care. Occupational health aims to ensure work-related health and wellbeing is managed through prevention and intervention practices.

There are many existing measures in place to support and protect those who work shifts. It is important for you to be aware of these and work with your manager to raise any concerns and seek solutions. For example, although the electronic rostering system has functions to ensure staff are not over-worked, mistakes can happen. It is important to inform your manager if you do have concerns about your shift pattern, so mistakes can be rectified and fed back to the rostering team.

If your manager identifies you as a nightworker, you should be offered a nightworker health assessment. This will take the form of a questionnaire returned confidentially to occupational health to be assessed. You may be contacted for further details and, on occasion, for a more detailed assessment. You can also contact occupational health at any time if you would like to discuss your health and fitness at work.

Occupational health can assist you to manage work-related injuries, mental wellbeing and creating lifestyle changes to manage your weight and physical activity level. Occupational health is proactive in creating opportunities to help staff manage their lifestyle, and works closely with local Health and Well-being groups.

If you have a disability, impairment or long term health condition which impacts on your ability to carry out your work, your employer should make reasonable adjustments where appropriate<sup>(10)</sup>. Having a health condition or disability may also make you more vulnerable to the possible negative effects of shift working. One example of adjustments

might include changes to your shift length or pattern. Working with your manager and occupational health will help address any concerns.

NHS Lothian's Staff Health and Wellbeing activities and initiatives are also provided across many sites. There are Wellbeing Leads who can provide information on current initiatives in your area. Check the Staff Room on the intranet for further information.

## 4. INVEST IN YOURSELF

A common approach to dealing with long and consecutive shift patterns is to get through the day by whatever means necessary and look forward to off days. Evidence has found that being young does not protect you from the negative outcomes associated with shift work. Fatigue, burnout and ill health can impact all, **at any age or stage of career.**

### DID YOU KNOW?

*A large study on shift workers across many professions found higher rates of ill health, chronic disease such as diabetes and obesity compared to the general population<sup>(1)</sup>.*

**We would like to challenge this mindset and mentality towards shift work.**

We want to support our staff to invest in their health by taking steps to become more mindful of the impact the work environment can have at all stages of their career. While our bodies are resilient and have great bounce-back ability, the effects of shift work do accumulate and challenge your physical and mental robustness.

Healthcare staff are challenged emotionally, physically and mentally each day, resulting in a direct and indirect impact on health. Some of the more well-known consequences of shift work on health care professionals includes increased risk of widespread fatigue and pain, GI/ metabolic/ cardiovascular disruption, anxiety, depression, and musculoskeletal disorders. All of which can lead to a reduced quality of life.

## Notable increased risk compared to non shift workers:

Immediate health consequences of shift working	Long term health consequences of shift working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Weight increase</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Mood change</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Sleep disturbance</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Bad eating habits</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Isolation and loneliness</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Risk of smoking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Chronic pain</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Obesity</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes, heart disease</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Depression, anxiety and burnout</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> GI disorders</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased risk of cancer</li></ul>

Any one, or combination of these factors can greatly impact your quality of life.



**Activity:**

- a) Using the grid, identify which shift patterns you work. Have you experienced any of the possible health consequences listed?
- b) Use the space on the next page to write down tips you have taken from this booklet, which would help to reduce your risks.

<p><b>Consecutive Shifts</b></p> <p>Fatigue</p> <p>Sleep deprivation</p> <p>Isolated from family and friends</p> <p>Poor eating habits on and off shift</p> <p>Depression, anxiety, burnout</p>	<p><b>Night Shifts</b></p> <p>Overweight</p> <p>Digestive problems</p> <p>Circadian rhythm disturbance</p> <p>Isolated from family and friends</p> <p>Poor eating habits on and off shift</p>
<p><b>Extended Shifts (&gt;12hrs)</b></p> <p>Fatigue</p> <p>Overweight</p> <p>Depression and anxiety</p> <p>Isolated from personal life</p> <p>Poor eating habits on and off shift</p>	<p><b>Consecutive and Bank Shifts</b></p> <p>Extreme fatigue</p> <p>Burnout symptoms</p> <p>Risk to mental wellbeing</p> <p>Isolated from personal life</p> <p>Impact on decision making ability</p>

## Tips to self:

E.g. actively manage fatigue by not choosing multiple consecutive long shifts where possible.

## Final thoughts

We want all our staff to flourish and hope this information will help you to manage your health on and off shift. Our key message to you is that working shifts is a risk factor for fatigue, which can, in turn, result in many negative consequences for you, colleagues and patients. Our aim is to help reduce such risks.

All the best to you in creating a healthier, happier and safer you, in and out of the workplace.

*Amanda Jones, Lothian Occupational Health and Safety  
October 2021*



## 5. TAKING THE NEXT STEP

### Helping you to achieve long term change

The decision to make a lifestyle change can feel challenging. Truth be told, it is not an easy task. However, with the right insight and knowledge to take things under your control, coupled with some confidence and motivation, making changes can be very achievable.

*This guidance can be applied to any behaviour – sleeping better, taking more physical activity, giving up smoking or committing more time to family, friends or hobbies.*

*Think about what change is important to you, consider how this information could help you.*

This leaflet may have made you consider how well you are taking care of yourself. If you would like some tips on how to better understand your behaviour and choices, you may wish to follow the guidance below.

Think of what change you would like to make and answer the questions on the next page with your personal goal in mind. **Insert your goal in each of the blanks.**

## A) Consider if now is the right time in your life to make a change

How **motivated** are you to ....., how **confident** are you that you can and how **important** is it to you to achieve this? Use the scale below to rate how you feel.

How **important** is it to you to ..... ?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

How **confident** are you that you can ..... ?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

How **motivated** are you to ..... ?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

If you scored **7 or above** to each question then it seems this could be a good time in your life to shake things up. If you scored **less than 7**, you may wish to have a think about what would need to change in your life so you feel ready and equipped for change. Timing is very important when making a change so if this isn't the right time for you, revisit this at another time. It is better to take on a challenge when confidence and readiness is high as this is a good indicator of success.

## B) Think of the pros and cons of your change

Think about change in regards to your work life, personal life, your present and future wellbeing.

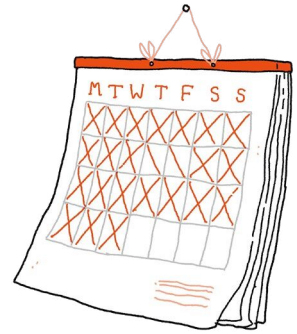
**Activity:** Use the table below to write down your thoughts; some examples are included to help you get started. Use this information to determine what would be the best course of action and revisit when you feel you need to reassess how you are feeling.

<b>Not changing.....</b> <i>(e.g. not reducing my weight)</i>	<b>Changing.....</b> <i>(e.g. reducing my weight)</i>
Positives	Negatives
Negatives	Positives

## C) Goal setting

It is important to be realistic about what you are hoping to achieve. Keep in mind that change doesn't happen overnight and it can be a slow process to reach your goal.

Have a think about which stage in life you felt you were hitting your goal. How long did it take for you to achieve it? What was your lifestyle like at that time? Do you have the time and resources to reach that goal again?



**Activity:** Completing the table below will help to keep your goals realistic and reachable.

My dream	
My happy	
My acceptable	
My disappointing	

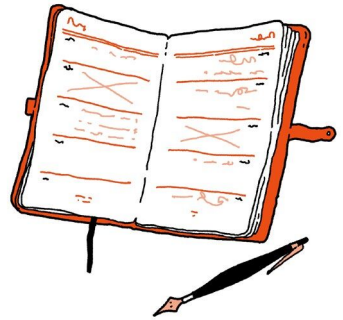
**Activity:** Keep yourself accountable for your goals. Fill in the table with some of our own goals and the timeline you wish to achieve them.

<b>Date started</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Date achieved</b>
	<i>E.g. Avoid television or texting while eating. Focussing will make you more aware of how much food you have eaten.</i>	
	<i>E.g. Take at least 20 minutes to eat your meal. It takes that long for your body to realise it is being fed.</i>	

## D) It is important to action plan for potential barriers

The environment, the social culture, the level of control you feel can all influence how big you feel these barriers are. Having some tactics to overcome hurdles is the best way to keep on track when trying to make a change.

Try to identify what some of the barriers might be before planning to make a change. Or if you are making lots of effort to change but hitting a wall, keep a diary of how you are feeling. Reflect on the diary the next week to pick out where you might be able to change things and break patterns. Below is one idea of some steps you can take to minimise roadblocks.



**Activity:** Complete the rest of the table with your own action plans.

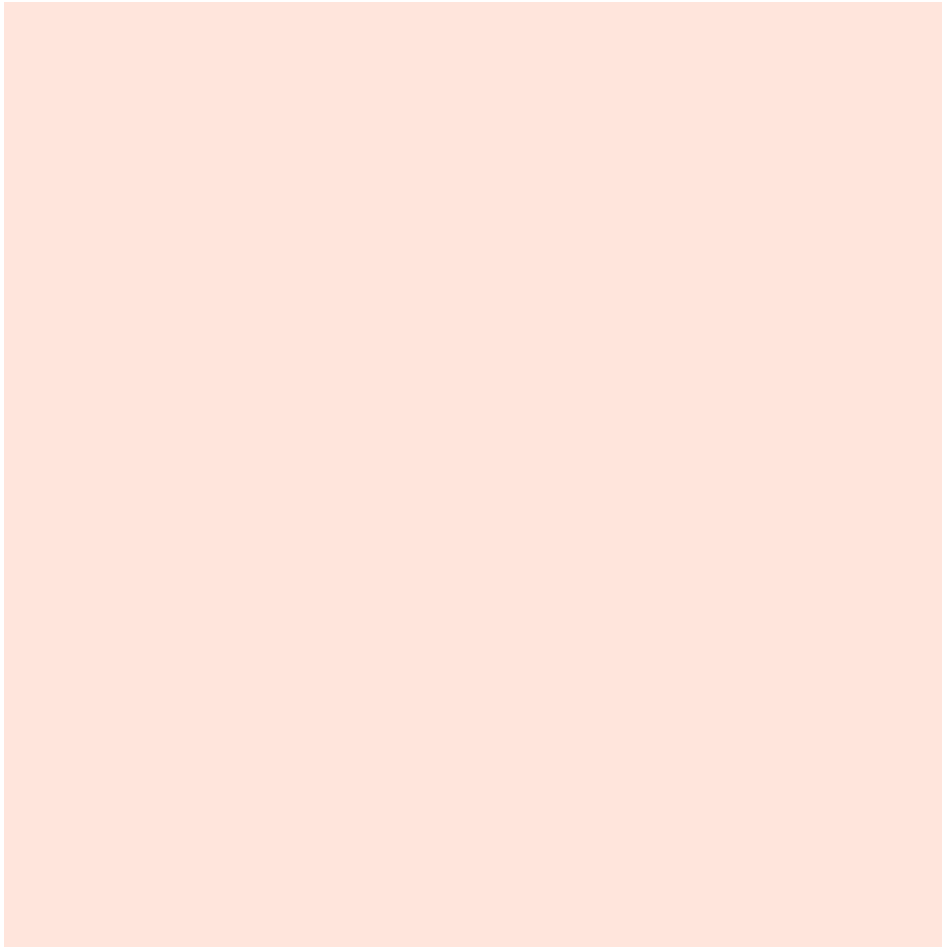
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>
<i>E.g. I don't have time for myself because I have to take the children to their activities and usually have to shop and eat on the go.</i>	<i>E.g. If you usually have to do the grocery shopping in this time, make an order online or make and follow a shopping list. This will minimise some of the visual prompts which can urge you to buy junk food or unhealthy snacks. You now have an extra hour to play with. If the children are swimming, join in at the adult lanes or slip into the gym for a quick 30 minutes on the bike or cross trainer.</i>

## E) Maintaining change

In the first couple of weeks you may see a good amount change, e.g. weight loss, and feel great. Eventually you may hit a plateau and it is at this point you should pull all your knowledge, skill and insight about your behaviour together. This will help you to reassess your situation to ensure your change (e.g. weight loss or weight maintenance) continues.

### **What are your strategies to maintain change?**

*Examples such as self-monitoring, self-reinforcement, minimise risks.*



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## Answers

Page 16 True or False: 1) F 2) F 3) T 4) F

Page 20 Eating and Drinking: 1) 60 2) 40 3) 26 4) 22 5) 140

Page 21 Caffeine: Decaf tea 2-5mg, Green tea 8-30mg, Diet coke 42mg, Red bull, 77mg, Coffee 94mg



This booklet is also available in electronic format  
and can be found on the NHS Lothian Intranet.

