

## Night Shift Nutrition - Top Tips

In response to signals of light and dark, our digestive hormones are more active during the day and suppressed at night. Therefore, eating a large, heavy meal during a night shift can be problematic to process. This can often result in uncomfortable gut symptoms, such as bloating, indigestion, wind and constipation. In addition, this food is more readily stored as fat.

So what to eat on a night shift?



### 1. Start your shift with a good source of protein

Protein keeps you fuller for longer than simple carbohydrate foods (white pasta, rice, bread, chips). Some chicken, beans, eggs, pulses, nuts and natural yoghurt are good examples of protein. You are less likely to crave sugary snacks and energy drinks if you have a nutritious filling meal at the start of the night.



### 2. Reduce intake of processed foods AND foods high in sugar and saturated fat

The body struggles to metabolise (process) these effectively during the night. Your blood sugar is more likely to be raised from these types of foods, and again, the body is less able to regulate that at night. This habitual pattern can increase your type 2 diabetes risk.



### 3. Meal plan for your set of nights

Plan your meals and snacks, and food shop for those ingredients, to make healthy eating easier. Include a diverse range of proteins, and vegetables and fruit to support your energy, weight management, gut health and mood.



### 4. Limit caffeine if it affects your sleep

Remember to drink fluid during the shift to keep your brain hydrated, reserving caffeinated drinks for the first half of your shift. Caffeine can stimulate our stress hormones, so after 2-3am switch to water, herbal teas and de-caf options. Then, when you get home you feel more inclined to sleep. Watch the caffeine content of carbonated and energy drinks.



### 5. Take plant-based meals and snacks to eat during the night

To maintain your energy during the night, stick to plant-based foods that are better digested. Take vegetable dishes, homemade soups, smoothies combining protein, vegetables and fruits, and low sugar snacks to reduce the negative impact of eating against your natural rhythm. Have a look at the Oscar Kilo Recipe section for some ideas.