

FACT SHEET: Shift Work

Shift Work Hazards

Shift work is work that occurs outside of the traditional 9 – 5 day and can involve morning, weekend and night shifts, and can involve rotating or long shifts. While important for many industries, shift work poses significant health and safety hazards for workers.

Shift Work Risks

Shift work creates several physical, psychological and social health risks. Key risks associated with shift work include:

Sleep Disturbances. Shift work can disrupt your natural sleep cycle, leading to sleep deprivation, insomnia and increased risk of accidents.

Fatigue. Changing shifts and long work hours can result in fatigue, affecting cognitive function, decision making and job performance.

Poor Health Outcomes. Shift workers have an increased likelihood of experiencing cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity and other chronic health conditions.

Mental Health Challenges. Shift work can cause stress, anxiety, depression and mood disorders.

Social Isolation. Work hours that are irregular can affect relationships and social interaction.

Control Measures to manage Shift-Work Hazards

Employers should take every reasonably practicable step to manage shift-work hazards, while at work and while travelling to and from work, using the following approaches:

Regular Schedules: Create consistent work schedules

Limit Consecutive Shifts: Avoid more than six consecutive 8-hour shifts or four 12 hour shifts.

Reduce Night Work: Minimise night shifts and consecutive night shifts.

Limit Overtime: Avoid regular overtime for night-shift or 12 hour shift workers.

Smart Breaks: Shorten shifts and provide extra breaks when work is hazardous, tiring or risky.

Rest time: Allow shift-workers time to rest and recover by providing sufficient breaks between shifts

Minimise Rotation: Avoid rotating shifts if possible

Advance Notice: Provide enough notice of roster changes

Consider Commute: Account for transport before and after long shifts

Better Workspaces: Design well-equipped and well-lit workspaces

Healthy Habits: Educate workers about healthy lifestyle habits and sleep practices

By creating well-thought-out schedules and supporting employees, shift work can be handled well. When employers prioritize worker well-being, they build a safe and healthy work atmosphere.



For more info, visit www.head-first.org.au or scan the QR code: