

## The Jumpsuit Way Jumpstart Program Tips (Night Shift Crew)

1. **Eat more protein, fewer carbs during your shift.** Not surprisingly, night shift workers often struggle with feelings of drowsiness and making the right food choices can help. Protein foods like tuna, eggs, string cheese, cottage cheese, peanut butter, turkey, and tofu can help increase alertness and focus, so try to incorporate these into your meals and snacks. Carbohydrate foods like bread, potatoes, and cereal, on the other hand, can have a relaxing or sedating effect—especially when eaten all by themselves, so avoid loading up on carbs during your shift.
2. **Avoid sugar and sweetened beverages.** As I've talked about before, too much sugar isn't good for anybody. But it may be even more damaging if you work the night shift. Research shows that the body's ability to process sugar declines at night—so my usual advice to limit your intake of added sugar and sweetened beverages goes double for night shift workers.
3. **Don't abuse caffeine.** I've also talked in the past about the benefits of caffeine and its stimulating effect may be helpful for people who need to be awake when their bodies would normally be sleeping. It's fine to have a cup or two of coffee toward the beginning of your shift but don't drink it all night long—especially if you find it difficult to fall asleep when it's time to.
4. **Don't use food as entertainment.** Night shift workers often find themselves snacking through the night out of boredom or to “keep their energy up,” and this often leads to an excess of empty calories that contribute to weight gain. Taking a break, a walk, stretching, getting some fresh air, or even taking a ten minute power nap are more effective. Raw vegetables like baby carrots, radishes, celery, and snow peas are a great way to satisfy the urge to snack; they are low in calories and high in nutrients.
5. **Bring it with you.** Perhaps the biggest challenge for shift workers who are trying to eat healthy is that vending machines and fast food is pretty much the only game in town. Unfortunately, in order to follow my advice, you'll probably have to brown-bag it—but the benefits to your health and well-being will be well worth the extra time and effort.
6. **Time your exercise.** Regular exercise can do a lot to increase your energy and regulate your body's rhythms despite an odd work schedule. Take full advantage of the stimulating effect of exercise by scheduling your workout before your shift—and not right before you're going to be trying to sleep. In addition, try to incorporate as much physical activity during work hours as your job will allow. Take the stairs instead of the elevator; stand instead of sit, take five or ten minutes of your break to do some calisthenics.
7. **See the light.** Many of our biological rhythms—including our sleep and wake cycles—are keyed to light and darkness and this is the source of many of the problems faced by shift workers. One way to help your body cope with an inverted schedule is to expose yourself to bright light during the night. Replacing some of the bulbs in your work-place light fixtures with full spectrum light bulbs, which produce light more similar to natural sunlight, may be helpful. Then, make your bedroom as dark as possible or use an eye mask to block out the light when you are sleeping during the day.
8. **Schedule time to sleep.** A lot of the health and diet issues that crop up for shift workers stem not from the fact that they work at night and sleep during the day but that they work and night and then don't sleep during the day. One way to minimize the negative impact of night shift work is to be sure that you schedule—and fiercely protect—enough time to sleep. For most people, that's 7-8 hours every 24 hours. As much as possible, avoid using your phone, computer, or other electronic devices before bed because the light they emit is particularly stimulating to the brain. If your sleeping environment is too noisy to allow you to fall and stay asleep, use a white noise generator or ear-plugs.

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