



Content for media

Nutrition hacks for busy shift-working professionals

- And recipe suggestions from top nutritionist -

As part of its Wellness Month, Vets Now has enlisted the help of one of the country's leading nutritionists, Lily Soutter, who is a regular on ITV's This Morning, to create nutrition hacks and tips for busy shift-working vets and nurses.

Lily, BSc Food & Human Nutrition, Dip NT, who is a huge advocate of workplace wellness, has also devised some quick and healthy recipes for you to prepare for going on shift.

Nine Smart Eating Strategies For Your Shift

Erratic working hours and sleep deprivation are not usually conducive to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. What's more our internal body clock called the circadian rhythm, plays a key role with the timing of metabolic processes including glucose control, fat metabolism and even energy expenditure. Many of these rhythms peak in the morning suggesting that our body is better adapted to processing food earlier on in the day. Therefore when working irregular hours it's key to focus on nourishing meals to reduce the risk of weight gain, diabetes and even cardiovascular disease.

By following these nine smart eating strategies, you can boost your health, energy and enhance your brainpower, enabling you to reach your full potential in work and life...

1. Get off the blood sugar roller coaster

Did you know that consuming just two 300ml sugary drinks each day would end up as a huge 22 kilograms of sugar in one year? Whilst it may be tempting to rely on sugar to improve alertness, many options can result in blood sugar highs and lows. Low blood sugar can lead to energy slumps, lack of concentration, irritability and may stimulate further cravings for sugary 'quick fix' foods.

Instead opt for snacks, which provide sustained energy, and maintain stable blood sugar. By combining protein, fibre and a little healthy fat with your carbohydrate source, you can slow the rate at which sugar is released into the blood stream.

For example:

- Wholegrain toast (carbohydrate + fibre) and poached egg (fat + protein) = slow release energy
- White toast (carbohydrate) and jam (carbohydrate) = fast release energy

2. Choose your carbohydrates wisely

Our brain runs on sugar to function, and uses as much as 20% of all energy required by the body to function. All carbohydrates break down to sugar, however only the slow release and fibre rich carbohydrates provide us sustained fuel all day long. Opt for wholegrain carbohydrates such as brown rice, brown bread, brown pasta, chickpeas, lentils, beans, quinoa, oats, beans, lentils, chickpeas and leave the skin on your potato.

3. Eat your way to a smarter brain with smart fats

60% of the brain is made up of fat, and omega 3 fats are critical for the brain's integrity and ability to perform. Aim to consume two portions of fish a week, one of which is oily – try salmon, mackerel, herring, sardines, anchovies. Alternatively opt for 2 tbsp. of chia or ground flax seeds on a daily basis.

4. Protein - little and often

Protein has satiating properties and maintains muscle mass, both of which play a role with maintaining a healthy body weight. We don't need a high protein diet, however we should aim to incorporate protein at each meal and snack.

Try lean meat, fish, natural yoghurt, eggs, tofu, tempeh, beans, lentils, chickpeas, nuts and seeds.

5. Preparation is the key to success

If you have the right food to hand, then you're more likely to make healthier choices when those sugar cravings hit. Whilst many of us have sugar cravings, consuming neat sugar straight off the spoon seems rather unappetising. Instead we crave a combination of sugar and fat, which provides those moreish and hyper-palatable qualities.

If opting for a healthier sweet snack, choose a mix sugar and a small amount of healthy fats for their satisfying properties - try apple (sugar) dipped in no added sugar nut butter (fat), or a banana (sugar) with unsweetened FAGE Total Greek yoghurt (fat).

6. Vitamin D

It's impossible to get enough of this sunshine vitamin during the winter months, and even harder during shift work. Which is why we should consider supplementing with 400IU vitamin D daily between October-April and if you're devoid of daylight then potentially all year round.

Vitamin D plays a key role with bone health, but is also involved with fighting coughs and colds and even plays a role with mood!

7. Don't forget to hydrate

Dehydration can result in low energy, headaches, poor mood and lack of concentration (1.). Research has also shown that even mild dehydration (1-2% loss of body weight), can reduce short-term memory and impact cognition test scores (2.).

If you want to feel and perform at your best then staying hydrated can really set you up for success!

8. Be mindful of meal timings

Aim for three meals and consider 2-3 snacks over a 24-hour period. Plan to eat within one hour of waking and don't skip your first meal of the day.

9. Caffeine - choose your sources wisely

It may be tempting to rely on caffeine for energy, however too much of this stimulant can disrupt sleep and will further interfere with our natural body clock. Instead try calming herbal teas such as lemon balm and chamomile, or even valerian root for sleep.

But if you really need a brain boost, you could opt for matcha green instead. Whilst matcha still comes with caffeine, it's also rich in L-theanine which has been shown to stimulate feelings of relaxed alertness and clarity.

1. Adan A (2012) Cognitive performance and dehydration. J Am Coll Nutr; 31 (2):71-78.
2. Lindseth PD, Lindseth GN, Petros TV et al (2013) Effects of hydration on cognitive function of pilots. J Mil Med; 178(7):792-8.

Lily' quick and healthy recipes for you to prepare and take with you on shift:

Breakfast ideas

Avocado, Mango and Lime Smoothie(serves 1)

- ½ avocado
- ½ mango
- 300ml unsweetened almond milk
- 1 handful spinach
- ½ lime, juiced
- 2 tbsp chia seeds (optional)

1. Blend ingredients and enjoy! Top tips: use frozen avocado and mango

Overnight Oat Oats (serves 1)

- 50g oats
- 250ml unsweetened almond milk or normal milk
- 2 heaped tbsp. FAGE Total Greek yoghurt
- 2 tbsp chia seeds
- Fresh Fruit

1. Mix the oats, chia seeds and milk together in a bowl, drizzle over almond butter. Top with raspberries and seeds and leave to soak overnight.

Eggs on Wholegrain Toast (serves 1)

- 2 eggs
- Wholegrain toast

- ½ avocado
- Chilli flakes

1. Poach or scramble eggs (can be done in microwave if short on time)
2. Smash avocado onto toast
3. Top with eggs and sprinkle over chilli flakes

Lunch/Dinner ideas

Butternut Squash, Spinach and Chickpea Curry and Brown Rice

- 1 tbsp. oil
- 1 onion, halved, thinly sliced
- 500g butternut squash cut into 3 cm pieces
- 100ml Madras chili & cumin cooking sauce
- 1 x 400g can low fat coconut milk
- 1 x 400g tin chickpeas, drained
- 1 bunch spinach
- Brown rice, to serve
- 2 tbsp fresh coriander leaves

1. Heat the oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat.
2. Add the onion and cook, stirring, for 3-4 minutes or until onion softens.
3. Add the pumpkin, cooking sauce, coconut milk, and bring to the boil. Reduce heat to low and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, for 12-15 minutes or until pumpkin is tender.
4. Add chickpeas and spinach. Cook, covered, for 3-4 minutes or until spinach wilts. Remove from heat.

Serve with some brown rice and sprinkle with fresh coriander.

Tuna Sweet Potato Jackets (serves 2-4)

- 4 small sweet potatoes (around 200g) each
- 185g can tuna in spring water, drained
- ½ red onion, finely sliced
- 1 small red chilli, deseeded and chopped
- Juice 1 lime
- 6 tbsp Greek yoghurt
- Handful coriander leaves

1. Prick potatoes with a fork. Place on microwavable plate and cook in High for 18-20 minutes in microwave.
2. Halve potatoes
3. Flake drained tuna with a fork and divide between the sweet potatoes
4. Top with the red onion and chilli, then squeeze over the lime juice.

5. Top with a dollop of yoghurt and scatter over the coriander to serve.

Acorn Squash and Feta Lunch Box (serves 2)

- 1 acorn squash, sliced and roasted
 - 50g kale, steamed
 - 50g cauliflower, steamed
 - 80g feta, crumbled
 - 1 pack Merchant gourmet quinoa
 - 2 handfuls pomegranate seeds
1. Place all ingredients in a your lunch box starting with quinoa, then layer on top on top the rest of the ingredients
 2. Season and drizzle a dressing of 2 tbsp white tahini, 2 tbsp olive oil, 1 tbsp lemon juice, 2 tsp honey (optional), salt + pepper

Red Pepper Hummus Lunch Box (serves 4)

- 1 x 400g can chickpeas, drained
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 red pepper, cut into strips
- 1-2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 tbsp lemon
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tbsp tahini

To serve

- Seeded wholegrain crackers
 - Mixed greens - chopped cucumber, spinach, edamame beans, pumpkins seeds
 - Fresh apricots
1. Blend with 4 tbsp water, seasoning and drizzle more olive oil if needed. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ red pepper, taste + add more if needed.
 2. Serve with mixed greens, apricots and seeded crackers

Asian Salmon Burgers (serves 4) - no image

- 500g salmon fillets, skin off
- 1 stick lemongrass
- 6cm piece of ginger
- $\frac{1}{2}$ a bunch of fresh coriander
- 4 tsp chilli jam

To serve:

- Fresh veg + sweet potato

1. Slice lemon grass (removed tough outer layer) and ginger (peel first) finely with coriander. Leave some coriander leaves behind.
2. Chop salmon into very small chunks, almost like it's a puree and season. Mix in with ingredients above.
3. Make four fishcakes with your hand and fry on medium heat for 2 minutes either side.
4. Serve with fresh vegetables and sweet potato

Snacks

Almond Butter, Strawberry & Pumpkin Seed Toast (serves 1)

1 slice wholegrain toast
Almond butter
Sliced Strawberries
Pumpkin Seeds

1. Spread nut butter on to toast
2. Top with sliced strawberries
3. Top with pumpkin seeds

Cacao & Chia Balls (serves 16)

- 90g rolled oats
 - 150g Pip & Nut or Meridian peanut butter
 - 2 tbsp cacao powder
 - 2-3 tbsp honey
 - 1 tbsp chia seeds
1. Mix all ingredients in bowl until fully combined
 2. Roll mix into equal bit sizes. Store in fridge.

Banana & Almond Butter (serves 1) no image

- 1 banana
 - 1 tbsp Pip & Nut almond butter or seed butter
1. Dip banana into almond butter & enjoy!

Spiced Apple & Greek Yoghurt (serves 1) no image

- 1 apple
- 2 heaped tbsp. FAGE Total Greek yoghurt
- Cinnamon

- Nutmeg

1. Core the apple leaving the bottom intact
2. Sprinkle over a pinch of cinnamon & ground nutmeg
3. Place in microwave and cook for 3-4 minutes
4. Serve with a dollop of Greek yoghurt

Beetroot Hummus (serves 6)

2 small cooked beetroot
1 can chickpeas
2 garlic cloves
1/2 lemon, juiced
60ml olive oil

1. Blend and serve with crudites

-Ends-

For media enquires contact Gail Chalmers on gail@gailchalmers.com or 07919411402

Vets Now notes to editor:

- Vets Now was established in 2001 and is the leading provider of emergency veterinary care for companion animals in the UK.
- With 24/7 Pet Emergency Hospitals in Glasgow, Manchester and Swindon, and 59 out-of-hours clinics nationwide, Vets Now is committed to delivering a responsive emergency and critical care service for cats, dogs and other small animals.
- Vets Now also partners with more than 1,400 veterinary practices across the UK to provide their clients with a seamless out-of-hours emergency care service. • Vets Now employs over 1000 staff.
- Vets Now remains at the forefront of emergency veterinary care through its commitment to clinical excellence and training, employing many of the country's top Emergency & Critical Care