

## **Royal Mail – Feeling First Class – Health Advice For Shift Workers.**

Recognising that workers who work shifts especially night shifts are more prone to certain health conditions due to changes in their body clock, reduced rest, changes eating habits, taking less physical exercise and having less social interaction with family and friends, below are some hints and tips that can improve physical and social health of workers who work shifts across unsociable hours. For further health information visit the Royal Mail Group Website [www.feelingfirstclass.co.uk](http://www.feelingfirstclass.co.uk) using the code "FFC1" when first registering.

### **Sleep**

We all need sleep to rest and repair the body, however sometimes a good days / night sleep is difficult.

- Choose a quiet room as your bedroom, where there is least disturbance from outside and internal noise and sounds
- Blackout the bedroom as much as possible to keep out daylight
- Do some gentle exercise such as a short walk before going to bed
- Relax by reading or listening to music before bed
- Have a shower or bath before bed
- Avoid drinking caffeine or other stimulants a few hours before going to sleep
- Drink very little alcohol as it reduces the quality of sleep.

### **Diet**

We all need food for energy however certain foods can impact on helping us stay alert or sleep when we need to.

- Eat regular light meals as heavy meals can cause drowsiness
- Avoid fatty foods as they are more difficult to digest.
- Choose foods that are easily digestible such as pasta, rice, bread, fruit and vegetables
- Avoid sugary foods, which provide a short energy boost, but then cause a dip in energy levels
- Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.

### **Physical Activity**

Physical activity can help with sleep as well as weight management. In addition it has been proven that there is a strong link between good physical health and good mental health.

- At least 30 minutes daily exercise is recommended and this can be split into two if necessary.
- Exercise can be as simple and inexpensive as a walk, jog, cycle, or exercising at home.
- Swimming is good as you use most of the muscle groups and your joints are supported by the surrounding water.
- It is recommended that physical activity is carried out with a friend or colleague as it leads to social interaction, which is beneficial not only for physical but also mental health.

### **Social Interaction**

We all need it to keep up to date with family and friends, and it's also good for our mental health.

- Let your family and friends know about how shift work affects you. If they understand the problems, they can be more supportive
- Let them know your shift schedule well in advance. This means that social and family activities can be planned around your shift schedule
- Get involved with family activities such as meals, household chores, sport and going out together
- Try to carry out some social activities with work colleagues who share similar shift schedules to you.