

# You Ask! We Answer...

*How do I stay fit and healthy while working the night shift?* BY ALICIA REWEGA

**Q:** *I work from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. I manage to fit in some exercise most days of the week, but find it hard to stick to a healthy diet and to control my cravings. What should I eat during my shift and when should I train to achieve my fat loss and fitness goals?* — DANTA J. BAPTISTE

**A:** Earlier this year, the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* published research from a study examining the effects of night shifts on an individual's health and found considerable evidence that shift work is associated with an increased risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes, possibly due to how your body may negatively adapt to chronically sleeping and eating at abnormal circadian times (your 24-

10-day study recruited healthy volunteers to undergo a shift work "simulation." That means participants did not maintain a consistent schedule, eating and waking in an irregular pattern for 10 days.

"What this means is that the study only approximated shift work. It did not adequately reflect chronic exposure that would be observed in more of a real-life situation," says Matthews. She adds that, although more research is

## Exercise and proper rest

Don't be discouraged; you can still achieve your health and fitness goals with just a little discipline and a fair amount of planning. Matthews advises anyone who works the night shift to exercise anytime before starting the shift, either the afternoon or early evening, and after a good "night's" sleep.

And, speaking of sleep, if you're not getting enough, you're going to have a challenge losing those "last stubborn 10 pounds." According to a study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* in 2006, women who sleep less than seven hours a night gain more weight over time (16 years to be exact) than those who get seven hours or more.

Matthews advises, whether you work day or night, to include a minimum of 30 minutes a day, at least five days a week, of moderate intensity cardio paired with resistance training

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hour sleep-wake cycle). But according to Jessica Matthews, MS, American Council on Exercise's continuing education coordinator, it is important to note two things about this study. One: Exercise was prohibited during the duration of this study. And, two: The

needed, individuals who work the night shift are encouraged to permanently adopt and adjust to a night-shift schedule, meaning they would have to sustain the same sleep-wake pattern seven days a week. Good-bye social life.



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FOR MORE.



and a regular stretching routine of 10 minutes a few days a week.

### What to eat and when

Training aside, it's tricky knowing what to eat and when – especially in the dead of the night when your body would normally be fast asleep. Jackie Newgent, RD, culinary nutritionist and author of *Big Green Cookbook* (Wiley & Sons, 2009), suggests only eating once during your eight-hour night shift, around 3 a.m. "For someone who regularly wakes up midday, I usually suggest saving breakfast for the late shift." What Newgent means is, eat lunch when you first wake up, eat dinner right before you leave for work and, for your last meal of the day, eat breakfast around 3 a.m. If you're still hungry, Newgent says healthy snacks are fine but getting in the habit of eating a smaller meal as your last meal will definitely help where controlling fat is a concern.

While there are no steadfast rules, Newgent provides a few 3 a.m. meal ideas and clean snack ideas. "One key to clean eating and staying fit for night-shift workers is to have a plan," says Newgent. Utilize your iPhone or BlackBerry to its fullest potential: Draft a daily routine for a balanced meal plan and training regimen that can be viewed anytime. Set your phone to receive an alert when it's time to get up and train or eat. This will make staying on track easy and stress-free.

#### Matthew's 3 a.m. Meal Ideas

**Homemade egg sandwich:** One whole-grain English muffin, one egg white scrambled in a pan misted with extra virgin olive oil, one slice of turkey or ham and one slice of low-fat, organic cheese.

**A clean parfait:** Made by layering plain low-fat plain yogurt, fresh berries of your choice and low-fat granola.

**A Mexican tofu scramble:** Sautéed tofu, black beans, soybeans, sweet potatoes or Yukon gold potatoes, chopped onion, red and green bell peppers, corn and a little low-fat cheese.

**TIP A:** Keep your chest lifted, shoulders back and core tight.

**TIP B:** How high you kick will depend on your individual flexibility.



## High Kick

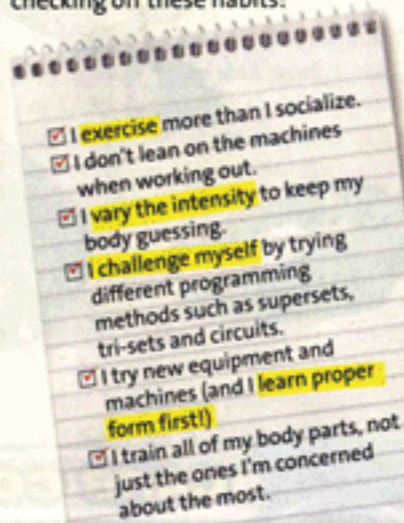
Blast fat while working on your balance and flexibility with this easy do-anywhere move.

**SET UP:** Stand with your feet together, extending your arms in front of you at shoulder-height palms facing each other [A].

**ACTION:** Bring one leg back slightly and then kick it as high as you can between your hands while rising up onto the ball of the opposite foot, making sure not to round your back [B]. Alternate legs until you have performed 10 kicks per leg.

## ROUTINE CHECKUP

Crank up your fat loss and move past a plateau by checking off these habits:



## SURVIVE THE HOLIDAYS

Stay lean this season with these strategies for sticky situations.

**OFFICE PARTY.** Eat a handful of almonds on your way over to silence hunger pangs.

**DINNER AT MOM'S.** Stick to one or two of your favorite dishes to avoid the buffet mentality that comes with variety.

**FRIENDLY GATHERING.** Offer to bring a clean dish so that you have something to fall back on.



## Fat Loss Fuel

For a fast, protein-packed meal, spread a quarter of an avocado on a whole wheat wrap and fill with slices of hard-boiled egg and tomato. Sprinkle sea salt to taste.



## Short on time?

No equipment either? "Put together a three-exercise body weight circuit you can do anytime, anywhere," says Craig S. Ballantyne, MS, CSCS. "Try push-ups, jumping jacks and lunges. That's a total-body workout right there."

