

Shift work has negative impact on most employees' health

October 27 2016

Most people who work shifts in Ireland regularly skip meals and do not get enough sleep, according to new research led by an investigator at University College Dublin.

The research published by [food safety](#) and nutritional health body safefood also found that over two-thirds of those who work shifts are [smokers](#) – a rate that is well above average in the [general population](#).

The authors of the study noted that lack of breaks, shift patterns, poor availability of food and fatigue due to long working hours were the most common barriers reported by [shift workers](#) to leading a healthier lifestyle.

More than two in three (67%) shift workers reported skipping [meals](#) on work days and almost 8 in 10 (78%) reported getting insufficient sleep.

Dr Clare Corish (pictured), Associate Professor at the UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science, led the research.

The investigators surveyed more than 1,000 people to better understand the factors that influence their food and related lifestyle habits while working shift hours.

An estimated 15 per cent of the workforce in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is employed in shift work.

Shift work entails working hours outside the standard working week, and may involve evening, weekend and rotating shift patterns.

Employees in the accommodation and food services, manufacturing and health and social sectors took part in the survey.

"What's noticeable from the research is how skipping meals, inadequate physical activity and insufficient sleep are commonly noted by shift workers as behaviours that impact upon them," said Dr Corish.

The study also identified gender and age as being influencing factors on health – men reported poorer dietary habits than women and were more likely to report being overweight.

Younger shift workers reported poorer dietary habits and higher alcohol consumption rates than older workers.

Shift workers surveyed across the three industry sectors also reported markedly different health issues due to their different workplace experiences.

Safefood says employers should pay more attention to providing adequate breaks and healthy dining options.

<https://t.co/h5XxHvSaCn>

— Ciarán Garrett (@Ciaran_Garrett) [October 24, 2016](#)

The health and social care and accommodation and food services groups were more likely to report a lack of breaks, and unclear finishing times, with poor structure to work organisation.

Meanwhile, shift workers in the manufacturing sector reported having more routine meals and less hazardous alcohol intake, but are more

overweight and sleep-deprived

Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan, Director, Human Health & Nutrition, safefood, said the findings highlighted the need for a number of "targeted approaches" to address the range of issues raised by shift workers.

The report recommended the provision of dietary guidelines tailored for individual work circumstances, guidance on healthy sleep patterns and the promotion of physical activity.

More information: "Managing Food on Shift Work."
[www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media... ublications/Research
%20Reports/shift-work-summary-report-edited-18102016.pdf](http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media...ublications/Research%20Reports/shift-work-summary-report-edited-18102016.pdf)

Provided by University College Dublin

Citation: Shift work has negative impact on most employees' health (2016, October 27) retrieved 20 March 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-10-shift-negative-impact-employees-health.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--