

There are many occupations that require shift work in order to continue business operations. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 15 million Americans work a job that requires some type of shift work. While some individuals choose to work different shifts such as the night shift, there are many people who do so because they need to. It is important for anyone who is working these shifts to understand the hazards associated with it.



Disruption of Circadian Rhythm

The main hazard of shift work is that it disrupts a person's circadian rhythm. [Psychology Today](#) describes circadian rhythm as follows: "Often referred to the "body clock", the circadian rhythm is a cycle that tells our bodies when to sleep, rise, eat—regulating many physiological processes." This rhythm is important because it regulates many of our physiological processes and when it is disrupted there can be many negative health effects. [A study completed at Rockefeller University](#) found that mice that had their circadian rhythm disrupted experienced weight gain, impulsivity, slower thinking, and other physiological and behavioral changes. So much research has been linked negative health effects to shift work that the [International Agency on the Research of Cancer](#) listed shift work as "probably carcinogen to humans" in 2007.

Hazards Created by Shift Work on the Job

Not only are there hazards to your health due to shift work, but there are also hazards in the workplace for individuals on these shifts. Some of the hazards created by shift work are:

- Inability to focus- less focus can lead to mistakes and thus injuries occurring on the job.
- Fatigue is a major issue in the workplace for workers who work regular hours. Those working shift work are put at even higher risks for fatigue related incidents.
- In some industries, there can be an increase likelihood of workplace violence at night (i.e. robberies).
- Increased stress levels due to not seeing family or health issues can lead to decreased job performance.

Summary

We all have to make a living and provide for our families, but if you have to do shift work it is important to understand the hazards. There are steps you can take to combat some of the negative effects of shift work. One step is to try to keep on the same shift and maintain the same sleep/awake cycle. Another step is to [eat right](#) and drink plenty of water to aid your body in its physiological processes. Talk with a doctor or sleep specialist to discuss other options to limit the negative effects of shift work.