# A screen shot of a computer  Description automatically generatedShift work for emergency medical workers

Emergency medical service (EMS) work requires care to be given 24-hour, seven days a week. As a result, EMS workers are required to provide services around the clock through shift work schedules. Shift work schedules increase health and safety risks by reducing sleep time, family and non-work-related responsibilities. Additionally, the long working hours increase exposures to workplace hazards while reducing recovery time. These immediate effects promote stress, fatigue, negative mood, decreased awareness, discomfort, physiologic dysfunction and poor health behaviors (overeating, smoking and lack of exercise). In turn, these could lead to workplace illnesses and injuries.

*Fatigue and health– the main issues with shift work activities:*

* Engineering controls can help, such as improved lighting, ventilation, proper temperatures and noise control.
* Make sleep a priority; your body cannot adjust if not given the chance.
* Keep bedroom dark and quiet; have family or roommates cooperate with noise control.
* During pre-sleep hours it is advisable to avoid the use of caffeine products as well as alcohol and tobacco.
* Meals should be regularly scheduled and avoid heavy meals near bedtime.
* Maintain a regular exercise routine to improve sleep as well as overall stress.
* Most important of all, get enough sleep that will accommodate your personal body needs.
* Eat a healthy diet and plan out meals to avoid buying fast food in a rush.
* Stay properly hydrated.

*Tips for encouraging alertness during night shifts:*

* Schedule short breaks throughout your shift.
* Exercise when feeling fatigued; stretch or take a short walk.
* Eat nutritious meals and snacks; avoid junk food.
* Develop practices on how to monitor fatigue levels among team members.
* Develop a buddy system when completing tasks during likely periods of fatigue.
* Never rely on medications or caffeine to enhance alertness.