

OSCAR KILO  
Family Life

# Mission Nutrition:

**Building healthier diets for  
officers, staff and their families**

# Introduction

The unpredictable nature of policing can take its toll on your loved ones in the service. The effects of shift work, eating on the go, stress and other factors can impact everyone in your household.

You may feel like you don't have any free time to help with a fresh approach to healthier eating. However, small changes can empower everyone to manage the day-to-day challenges of the job at work and home.

Shift workers are more prone to chronic health conditions such as high blood pressure, obesity and type 2 diabetes. Switching to a more nutritious diet can help to cut the risk of developing these issues.



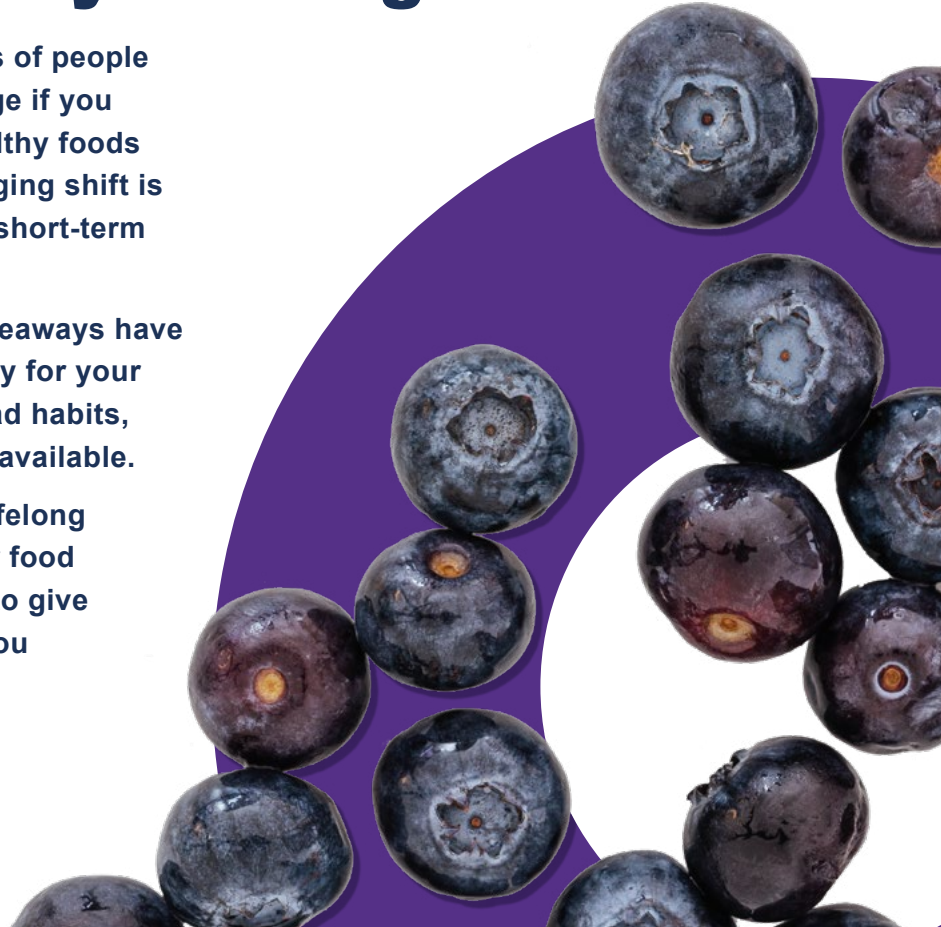


# **Lasting lifestyle changes**

**Healthy eating is a challenge for lots of people – but it can be even harder to manage if you work in policing. Seeking out unhealthy foods after a traumatic incident or challenging shift is common and understandable. It’s a short-term fix, though.**

**Highly processed meals such as takeaways have a negative long-term impact. It’s easy for your partner/family member to get into bad habits, especially since junk food is widely available.**

**Breaking the link between fatigue, lifelong habits, work-related stress and poor food choices isn’t easy. This guide aims to give you some helpful ideas and direct you towards additional resources.**





# Time to see nutrition in a new light?

When work and home life are hectic, it may feel daunting to change your family's eating habits by focusing more on nutrition. Here are three great reasons to make a start today:

## 1) Beating fatigue

If your partner is a shift worker, fatigue will affect them and the rest of your household. How different would things be if they had more energy and vitality at home? Eating more healthily will have a positive knock-on effect on all areas of their life, such as sleep quality and mood.

## 2) Reducing the risk of illness

Shift workers are more prone to chronic health conditions such as high blood pressure, obesity and type 2 diabetes. Switching to a more nutritious diet can help to cut the risk of developing these issues.

## 3) Creating healthier habits at home

Eating what our bodies need for fuel rather than what we crave isn't only about improving the quality of life of those in policing. Once you've started to form the right habits and see the benefits, it will soon become second nature for your entire household.

Get started today by asking yourself these three quick questions:

- How different will life be after making these positive changes?
- Can you support your partner/family member in improving their wellbeing?
- What are the disadvantages of staying the same?





## Plan ahead

Timing has a vital role to play when it comes to healthy eating at work and home. For example, having something substantial towards the end of a night shift will make food harder to digest before sleeping.

Enjoying a nutritious main meal before a shift, including a good source of protein to keep you full, and taking healthy snacks will ensure an even release of energy rather than peaks and troughs, which can affect alertness and performance.

Planning and preparing healthier options with your partner/family member can help with the above. Eating begins with savouring sights, sounds and smells, so making something nutritious and delicious together in advance can make it a more

appealing choice. Get more information on the benefits and download this **healthy meal planner for shift workers** created by Anna Earl who joined the police in 2000 before training to become a nutritionist.

Of course, meal prepping isn't always possible when you or your loved one works night shifts or has caring responsibilities. Start by making one or two small changes and don't put too much pressure on yourself.





# Make more colourful choices

With supermarkets, takeaways and drive-throughs full of food lacking nutrients, planning what to eat in advance is essential. Naturally, this starts with the food you bring into your home. But, of course, there's always a nutrient-packed alternative for every unhealthy choice.

Eating more nutritious foods has many benefits, which can help those in the police cope with the physical and mental demands of the job.

- Reduce the sugar spikes and dips
- Get a more gradual release of energy to help performance
- Satisfy appetites for longer

**Eating a rainbow** of at least two fruits and five vegetables daily is a habit that will deliver an overall boost. However, it's unrealistic to go from a poor diet to one that's 100% healthy overnight.

In the long term, the aim should be to eat a variety of healthy, nourishing foods 80% of the time. The less healthy options should be reduced to occasional treats. This will feel more manageable than making wholesale changes overnight. You can work towards this goal as you adjust your habits and feel the benefits.





# Eat mindfully

During busy and stressful times, it's easy for police officers and staff to forget how to eat properly, which can cause issues such as overeating or indigestion.

For example:

- › Reacting out of habit to a heightened emotional state
- › Grabbing unhealthy food on the go
- › Devouring meals and snacks as quickly as possible

The solutions to the points above are mindful eating, which includes:

- › Thinking about the type of food you're about to eat (is it a short-term fix?)
- › Pausing first and taking a few deep breaths (which helps the digestive system prepare)
- › Chewing slowly and mindfully for better digestion





# Don't forget to drink

It's easy to overlook, but choosing healthier drinks is a key part of getting a balanced diet.

The NHS **Eatwell Guide** says we should drink six to eight cups or glasses of fluid a day. Water, lower-fat milk and sugar-free drinks, including tea and coffee, all count.

Many soft drinks, including instant powdered drinks and hot chocolate, are high in sugar. Try to drink water and herbal teas instead of caffeine and carbonated drinks.

If this guide whets your appetite to learn more about good nutrition, explore the free resources below.



[How to eat more mindfully](#)



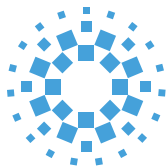
[A quick guide to healthy nutrition](#)



[Oscar Kilo Nutrition for Wellbeing Hub](#)







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**The National Police  
Wellbeing Service**

If you have a family member or close friend who works in the police,  
we're here for you too. It's a role that throws up unique challenges  
and this can have a wider impact on the wellbeing of families.

You'll find more resources and support  
for families and friends on our website:



[www.oscarkilo.org.uk/family-life](http://www.oscarkilo.org.uk/family-life)