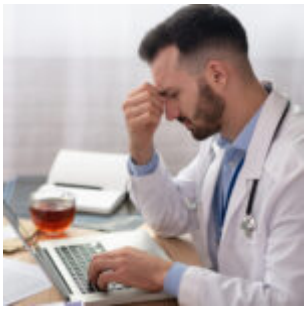
Study Finds Shift Workers Have Harder Time Recovering from Injury



It's well documented that employees who work evening, night or rotating shifts face a higher risk of being injured on the job than those who work days. But a new study has found that shift workers are also more likely to have a harder time recovering from such an injury.

The study by Dr. Imelda Wong from the Institute for Work & Health (IWH) compared the health outcomes of injured workers in standard day shifts with those of injured shift workers. She found that injured workers in non-standard shifts reported poorer health scores two years after an injury.

"What the findings suggest is recovering from a work-related injury might be more difficult for people doing shift work,' says Wong, holder of the Institute's Mustard Fellowship in Work and Health 2013-2015.

The study, which was published in the Nov. 2015 issue of *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, used data from Statistics Canada's National Population Health Survey (NPHS), specifically 1,650 individuals who were 16-65 years old; earned a wage or salary; and had experienced an injury at work severe enough that their normal activities were limited. The team matched each of these injured workers with four uninjured people, for a total of 9,540 participants.

The team used NPHS survey results during the year of work injury to determine a number of baseline characteristics of the injured workers and their non-injured controls, including:

- Health scores, which were calculated based on self-reported levels of impairment along a broad spectrum including vision, hearing, speech, mobility, dexterity, cognition (memory and thinking), emotion, and pain and discomfort
- Shift schedules, which were broken down into regular daytime shifts and non-standard shifts (i.e., night, evening or rotating shifts).

The research team then examined the survey responses of the injured workers and their controls two years after the injury, focusing on respondents' health scores and whether they were working a different shift schedule or had left the labour force.

The study found that, as has been shown in previous research, people working non-standard shifts reported more work injuries (34%) compared to people working daytime shifts only (25%).

And after taking age, gender, education and physical job demands into account, workers in non-standard shifts who'd been injured on the job had poorer self-reported health scores two years later than workers in standard shifts who'd also been injured. They also reported poorer health scores than non-injured workers doing shift or regular daytime work.

The silver lining was that injured shift workers were *not* more likely to change their shift schedules or leave the labour force than injured workers doing regular daytime shifts.

"There's a good-news-bad-news story in these findings,' says Wong. 'The good news is the ability of shift workers to stay employed isn't jeopardized by injury'any more so than standard daytime workers.' On the other hand, she notes, the health scores of these shift workers do decline after the injury,

which means that they’re showing up at work in poorer states of health.

“The implication may be that additional resources may be needed to assist shift workers after an injury,” Wong says.

Source: *At Work*, Issue 82, Fall 2015: Institute for Work & Health, Toronto

Learn more about the risks related to shift work:

- Risk of injury by workers changing shifts
- Shift work and diet have been linked to inflammation and health issues
- Impact of insufficient rest between shifts
- Study confirms that night and shift workers most likely to get hurt
- Shift workers and sleep disorders.