
Wellness Week Day 2 - Sleep Health

Sleep is our Superpower and Life Support System!

Approximately 40% of First Responders have a form of Sleep Disorder!

There are two ways our bodies and brains get energy. 1. Sleep 2. Food. In order to optimize our health, energy, and performance we must control all the controllables available to us. Arguably, sleep is the #1 controllable and modifiable activity that directly impacts our physical and psychological health more than any other dimension of wellness. Think about how you feel when you are underslept. Our nervous system gets dysregulated and we experience extreme fatigue, poor mood, lack of attention, focus, and concentration, increased sensations of pain and our perception of stress, inability to recall memory and new learning and diminished ability to resist temptation which causes us to make poor food choices since the body and brain is craving energy so we overindulge in quick simple carbs loaded with sugar, fat, and salt. Think of being awake as low-level brain damage. The energy it takes to think, make decisions, concentrate, focus, live, workout, and work is depleting and fatiguing. These are just some examples of how poor sleep can negatively impact our health.

On the opposite side of the spectrum; quality sleep increases our energy, repairs and builds muscle, consolidates new learning and memory, clears and flushes waste from the brain, releases natural growth hormones, and enhances our recovery. Being underslept exacerbates all other health and wellness related conditions to include stress, anxiety, and depression and limits our ability to heal from injuries. Our brains and bodies require healthy, continuous, uninterrupted sleep that reaches all (4) stages of the sleep cycle. Each full sleep cycle from non-Rem sleep, Deep Sleep, and REM sleep lasts approximately (90) minutes so this is why sleep experts recommend 7-9 hours of sleep you can obtain as many full sleep cycles as possible.

Be the architect of healthy sleep by creating healthy Sleep Hygiene Habits which include some tips such as:

- Try to stick to a sleep-wake schedule to regulate your circadian rhythm to optimize your energy.
- Exercise throughout the day improves your sleep quality.
- Limit daytime naps.
- Sleeping in a cool, dark environment that limits distraction.
- The ideal temperature to obtain quality sleep is 65-67 degrees.
- Limit artificial blue light from screens such as cell phones, tablets, computers, TVs, and LED lights.
- Limit caffeine. Caffeine has a half-life of approximately (8) hours so half of that amount of caffeine in that cup of coffee you had at 12:00 is still in your system at 2000 hours.
- Pay attention to eating too much or too little 2-3 hours before bed which can interrupt sleep with hunger pains or increased digestion.
- Take a warm shower or bath. This may sound counterintuitive but the warmth you feel is superficial on your skin and when you get out your body will automatically try to cool itself down thereby lowering your core body temperature.
- Write down any anxious thoughts or unchecked to do lists so you can off load those from your mind.
- Talk to your doctor about healthy natural and herbal sleep remedies that may not cause deep sleep but they help you prepare your mind and body for sleep.

How often have you heard, or even said it yourself, "I'll get enough sleep when I'm dead?" Most likely we have all said that and subscribed to that unhealthy idea. Well, studies show that the shorter you sleep, the shorter your life, so that statement just mentioned may become a reality sooner than you would like!

Sleep for health and more importantly, sleep for LONGEVITY! Reframe your perspective to think our new day begins the moment you go to sleep!

Supporting Officer Safety Through Family Wellness: The Effects of Sleep Deprivation

While sleep deprivation is not exclusive to law enforcement, it is often amplified due to the unique stressors of the job and shift work. Sleep is essential to maintain and repair bodily functions and systems. Sleep, or lack of, has effects on all functions of the mind and body, which not only affects an officer's job, but also family wellness.

Awake for 19 hours
comparable to a blood alcohol concentration of... **0.05%**

Awake for 24 hours
comparable to a blood alcohol concentration of... **0.10%***

Effects of Sleep Deprivation on the Body

- Impaired Alertness**
Sleep deprivation impairs an individual's ability to remain focused and alert for long periods of time.¹⁴
- Increased Risk for Heart Disease**
Sleep deprived persons are at a higher risk for heart disease and high blood pressure when only sleeping five to six hours a night.¹⁵
- Spatial Disorientation**
Sleep deprived persons are more likely to become disoriented when navigating, and often report slower reaction times.¹⁶
- Decreased Cognitive Processes, Problem-Solving, Concentration, and Reasoning**
Lack of sleep inhibits decision making, interferes with forming sound judgements, and induces poor assessments due to increased irritability.¹⁷
- Lack of Appetite Control**
Sleep deprivation has shown to increase feelings of hunger and affect a person's ability to judge portion sizes.¹⁸

Sleep deprivation can be dangerous

more than **40%** of police officers reported having fallen asleep while driving
25% reported that happened more than once a month¹⁴

More than half of all police officers don't get enough sleep¹⁴

What about working the night shift?

Our bodies naturally relax and cool down when it gets dark outside and become alert when the sun is up. Working second or third shift can disrupt the circadian clock and make sleep more difficult. Working against the natural rhythms of the body can cause sleep disorders and fatigue.

Law enforcement is a 24-hour job and for many, working the night shift is unavoidable. Learning how to adapt to the schedule and demands of the job can help combat some of the potentially dangerous symptoms of working the night shift.

If you work rotating night shifts:

- The circadian clock can't shift fast enough to keep up with a rotation.
- The American Psychological Association recommends avoiding symptomatic relief; caffeine to stay awake at night and sedatives to sleep during the day. These methods can be dangerous and only temporarily disrupt your circadian clock.¹⁹

If you work a permanent night shift:

- It is best to slowly shift your circadian clock enough to still be able to function on days off.
- The best way to do this is on days off, go to sleep as late as possible and sleep as late as possible.
- On a workday, minimize the sunlight exposure on the drive home by wearing sunglasses and utilize blackout curtains when trying to sleep.²⁰



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The Effects of Sleep Deprivation, continued...

What can officers do?

Practice a healthy lifestyle.

- Maintain balanced eating habits
- Refrain from tobacco use
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Exercise regularly
- Have an annual physical

Exercise proper sleep hygiene.

- Get seven to nine hours of sleep every night²¹
- Limit caffeine intake close to sleep time
- Minimize screen time before bed

Talk to your doctor about sleep disorders.

- Law enforcement officers are **twice as likely** to have a sleep disorder as non-law enforcement.²²

For more information about the Institute for Community-Police Relations, please visit: <http://www.theiacp.org/ICPR>.

This publication is one in a series. For more family support resources please visit: <http://www.theiacp.org/ICPRlawenforcementfamily>

¹⁴Rajaratnam, Shanita MW, Laura K. Barger, Steven W. Lockley, Steven A. Shea, Wei Wang, Christopher R. Landrigan, Connor S. O'Brien et al. "Sleep disorders, health, and safety in police officers." *Jama* 306, no. 23 (2011): 2567-2578.

¹⁵Hagerkamp, Reanne S., Emil Nilsson, Victor C. Nilsson, Colin D. Chapman, Helle Vogel, Lina S. Lundberg, Sara Zaki et al. "Acute sleep deprivation increases portion size and affects food choice in young men." *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 38, no. 9 (2013): 1688-1694.

¹⁶Rajaratnam, Shanita MW, Laura K. Barger, Steven W. Lockley, Steven A. Shea, Wei Wang, Christopher R. Landrigan, Connor S. O'Brien et al. "Sleep disorders, health, and safety in police officers." *Jama* 306, no. 23 (2011): 2567-2578.

¹⁷<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topical-issues> Updated June 2017.

¹⁸Yates, Shana, Vanessa Gustafson, Edward Stone, Ford Burke, Michele Ferrara, Tami Campbell, and Chaegee Park. "Poor sleep quality affects spatial orientation in virtual environments." *Sleep Science* 9, no. 3 (2016): 225-28.

¹⁹Rajaratnam, Shanita MW, Laura K. Barger, Steven W. Lockley, Steven A. Shea, Wei Wang, Christopher R. Landrigan, Connor S. O'Brien et al. "Sleep disorders, health, and safety in police officers." *Jama* 306, no. 23 (2011): 2567-2578.

²⁰Rajaratnam, Shanita MW, Laura K. Barger, Steven W. Lockley, Steven A. Shea, Wei Wang, Christopher R. Landrigan, Connor S. O'Brien et al. "Sleep disorders, health, and safety in police officers." *Jama* 306, no. 23 (2011): 2567-2578.

²¹<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/01/night-work.aspx>. American Psychological Association, 2017.

²²<http://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/01/night-work.aspx>. American Psychological Association, 2017.

²³National Sleep Foundation Memorandum released February 2015.

²⁴Pearson, Beth. "Sleep disorders, work shifts and officer wellness." *National Institute of Justice Journal* 270 (2015): 38-58.

²⁵<https://sleep.org/articles/compare-for-sleep/>

²⁶<https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-facts-ips/>

How can family help?

Assist in making the sleeping space more comfortable and appealing.

- Black out curtains, minimal electronics, supportive pillows and mattress, and a comfortable temperature are all ways to help with sleep.
- Ideal temperature for a room to sleep in is 60°-67°F.²⁸
- Suggested addition: minimize activity in the house when the officer is trying to sleep.

Encourage your partner to talk to a doctor about his/her sleeping habits, particularly if s/he snores frequently, has trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, or begins to show other health concerns.

Create a family bedtime ritual.

- Calming and relaxing environments help decrease stress and anxiety making falling asleep and staying asleep easier.
- One hour before you go to sleep have a "wind down" hour. Do calming activities such as reading or taking a relaxing bath or shower. This is the crucial time to avoid electronic screens that can increase restlessness.²⁹

Get into a routine as much as possible.

Eating on a regular schedule and going to sleep and waking up on a regular schedule, no matter what the schedule is, all decrease the effects of sleep deprivation.

Communicate with family and friends to help distribute family responsibilities, such as sports practices, carpools, and grocery shopping.

Exercise regularly. Vigorous exercise can make it easier to fall asleep. Make it fun for the whole family. Think of creative family exercise opportunities like hiking, ice skating, dancing, and/or swimming.

This publication is one in a series. For more family support resources please visit: www.theiacp.org/ICPRlawenforcementfamily

The IACP's Institute for Community Police Relations (ICPR) is designed to provide guidance and assistance to law enforcement agencies looking to enhance community trust, by focusing on culture, policies, and practices. For more information, contact us at...

ICPR@theIACPOrg theIACPOrg/ICPR 800.THEIACP

