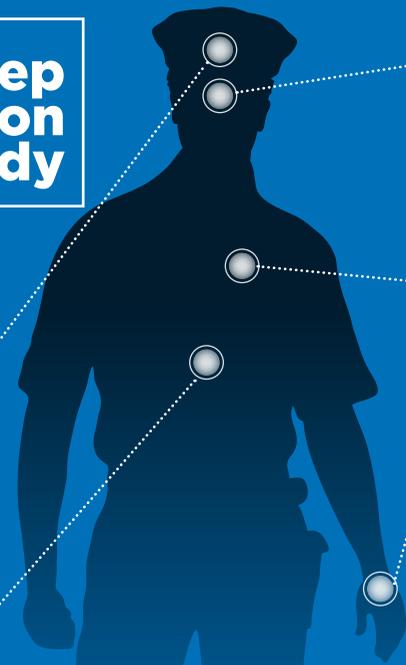


Supporting Officer Safety Through Family Wellness: The Effects of Sleep Deprivation

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.



Effects of Sleep Deprivation on the Body



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.ⁱ



Lack of Appetite Control

Sleep deprivation has shown to increase feelings of hunger and affect a person's ability to judge portion size.ⁱⁱ



Impaired Alertness

Sleep deprivation impairs an individual's ability to remain focused and alert for long periods of time.ⁱⁱⁱ



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.^{iv}



Spatial Disorientation

Sleep deprived persons are more likely to become disoriented when navigating, and often report slower reaction times.^v



More than half of all police officers don't get enough sleep.^{vi}

more than **40%** of police officers reported having **fallen asleep while driving**.

25% reported that happened **more than once a month**.^{vi}

Sleep deprivation can be dangerous



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 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.^{ix}

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.^x



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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 night^{xi}
- 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^{xii}



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**.^{xiii}
- 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.^{xiv}



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.



- 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>

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

ⁱⁱHogenkamp, Pleunie S., Emil Nilsson, Victor C. Nilsson, Colin D. Chapman, Heike Vogel, Lina S. Lundberg, Sanaz Zarei et al. "Acute sleep deprivation increases portion size and affects food choice in young men." *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 38, no. 9 (2013): 1668-1674.

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

^{iv} <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/sdd/signs>. Updated June 2017.

^vValera, Silvana, Veronica Guadagni, Edward Slone, Ford Burles, Michele Ferrara, Tavis Campbell, and Giuseppe Iaria. "Poor sleep quality affects spatial orientation in virtual environments." *Sleep Science* 9, no. 3 (2016): 225-231.

^{vi}Rajaratnam, Shantha MW, Laura K. Barger, Steven W. Lockley, Steven A. Shea, Wei Wang, Christopher P. Landrigan, Conor S. O'Brien et al. "Sleep disorders, health, and safety in police officers." *Jama* 306, no. 23 (2011): 2567-2578.

^{vii}Rajaratnam, Shantha MW, Laura K. Barger, Steven W. Lockley, Steven A. Shea, Wei Wang, Christopher P. Landrigan, Conor S. O'Brien et al. "Sleep disorders, health, and safety in police officers." *Jama* 306, no. 23 (2011): 2567-2578.

^{viii}Dawson, Drew, and Kathryn Reid. "Fatigue, alcohol and performance impairment." *Nature* 388, no. 6639 (1997): 235.

^{ix} <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/01/night-work.aspx>. American Psychological Association, 2011.

^x <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/01/night-work.aspx>. American Psychological Association, 2011.

^{xi} National Sleep Foundation Memorandum released February 2015

^{xii} Pearsall, Beth. "Sleep disorders, work shifts and officer wellness." *National Institute of Justice Journal* 270 (2012): 36-39.

^{xiii} <https://sleep.org/articles/temperature-for-sleep/>

^{xiv} <https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-tools-tips/healthy-sleep-tips/page/0/1>

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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.

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