

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

Impaired Alertness

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



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.



Spatial Disorientation

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



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.



Lack of Appetite Control

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





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 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, minimise the sunlight exposure on the drive home by wearing sunglasses and utilise blackout curtains when trying to sleep.

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.



more than half of all police officers don't get enough sleep.



Sleep deprivation can be dangerous

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

25% reported that it happened **more than once a month.**