



Improving Sleep Habits

Sleep is vital for health, performance, and well-being. Your brain needs sleep to restore and repair, form memories, and process new information. Sleep also plays a significant role in immune function, metabolism, learning, and other vital functions. Despite the critical role that sleep plays in both health and readiness, many Sailors and Marines do not get the sleep they need.

The Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC) Health Promotion and Wellness (HPW) Department provides resources and tools to help Sailors, Marines, beneficiaries, and DoD civilians understand the importance of sleep and improve their sleep habits. The first step in improving sleep is increasing awareness of how much sleep one needs, what quality sleep is, and the importance of getting enough. Once the individual is ready to change their sleep habits, there are many tools and resources available to support these changes.

Awareness

The following sources include information that can be used to increase awareness of the importance of good sleep habits and the consequences of sleep deprivation. Targeted information is available for sub-groups such as wounded, ill, and injured service members.

- [Sleep and Fatigue \(Naval Safety Center\)](#)
- [Sleep Information and Resources \(NMCPHC\)](#)
- [Sleep for Wounded, Ill, and Injured \(NMCPHC\)](#)
- [Explore Sleep Deprivation and Deficiency \(National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)\)](#)
- [Sleep and Sleep Disorders \(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention\)](#)
- [Sleep Disorders \(Medline Plus\)](#)
- [Healthy Sleep: Why Sleep Matters \(Harvard Medical School\)](#)
- [Sleep and Brain injury \(Brainline.org\)](#)

SLEEP & WARFIGHTERS
DID YOU KNOW? SLEEP IMPACTS YOUR PERFORMANCE.

SLEEP NEED
Most people, including service members, need 7-8 hours of sleep each night to perform optimally.

SLEEP DEBT
Killing yourself isn't a badge of honor. It's a sign of weakness. It's a sign you're not taking care of yourself. It's a sign you're not ready for the next day.

REPORTED WARFIGHTERS
Sleep deprivation is a leading cause of errors and accidents in the military.

BRAIN
In order to recover and function, the brain needs sleep. Without it, the brain's ability to process information and make decisions is impaired.

PERFORMANCE
Lack of sleep leads to decreased alertness, slower reaction times, and impaired judgment.

PHYSICAL FITNESS
Sleep deprivation can lead to decreased physical performance and increased risk of injury.

RELATIONSHIPS
Lack of sleep can lead to irritability, mood swings, and strained relationships.

AFTER DEPARTMENT
Sleep deprivation can lead to long-term health problems and decreased quality of life.

COMBATING SLEEP DEBT

REMEMBER - THE IDEAL COUNTERMEASURE IS TO AVOID ACCUMULATING A SLEEP DEBT IN THE FIRST PLACE!

BEST STRATEGIES

- ENVIRONMENT**
Keep your room cool, dark, and quiet. Use earplugs and eye masks if needed.
- WIND-DOWN**
Start to wind down 30-60 minutes before bed. Turn off electronics and start using sleep hygiene practices.
- WAKE UP**
All the same time every day, even if you're not tired.

ON A PRICK

- CAFFEINE**
Avoid caffeine 6-8 hours before bed.
- SLEEP AID**
Use over-the-counter sleep aids only if necessary and consult your doctor.

EXCESS CAFFEINE
Excess caffeine can lead to insomnia and other sleep problems.

ALCOHOL
Alcohol can lead to fragmented sleep and is not recommended for improving sleep.

IN MORE INFORMATION
Visit the HPRC website for more information on sleep and performance.

HPRC
HEALTH PROMOTION AND WELLNESS DEPARTMENT



Education

Below are educational resources that can be used to assess if you're getting enough sleep, improve your sleep habits, and know when to seek help from a professional.

- [Sleep Optimization Strategies \(Human Performance Research Center \(HPRC\)\)](#)
- [Your Guide to Healthy Sleep \(NIH\)](#)
- [National Sleep Foundation](#)
- [Sleep Video Stories \(Afterdeployment\)](#)
- [Sleeping Better \(University of Michigan Depression Center\)](#)
- [Relax, Relax Toolkit](#) was developed for use by Sailors and Marines who would like to reduce stress through deep relaxation and to optimize performance. One of the sections focuses on sleep relaxation. (NMCPHC)
- [Sleep Optimization Assessments, and Tools \(HPRC\)](#)
- [Insomnia Tools for Providers \(Center for Deployment Psychology\)](#)



The Center for Telehealth and Technology (T2) developed two mobile applications to assist in improving sleep.

- [Dream EZ](#), helps a person “rewrite” their nightmares to make them diminish in intensity and frequency. (T2)
- [CBT-i Coach](#) guides users through the process of learning about sleep, developing positive sleep routines, and improving their sleep environments. (Note: this app is intended is for people engaged in cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-i) with a health provider, or those who have experienced symptoms of insomnia and would like to improve their sleep habits.) (T2)

Additional Resources

- U.S. Army Public Health Center:
<https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/sleep/Pages/default.aspx>
- Military Health System and Defense Health Agency: <http://health.mil/Search-Results?query=sleep>
- Real Warriors Campaign: <http://www.realwarriors.net/active/deployment/sleep.php>
- American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/topics/sleep/>
- Veterans Health Administration:
http://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/PTSDCoachOnline/tools_menu.htm?cat_id=sleep
- Military OneSource: <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>