



Sleep Hygiene: Creating Healthy Sleep Habits

"Sleep hygiene" refers to a series of healthy sleep habits that can improve your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. Getting enough sleep is essential to overall health and wellness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has called insufficient sleep a public health epidemic. Recent NMCPHC Worksite Health Risk Assessments showed that unhealthy sleep increased with more time away from their home station and unhealthy sleep is considered a high risk factor among respondents. Sleep affects almost every tissue and system in the body including the body, heart, and lungs to metabolism, immune function, and disease resistance. In fact, chronic insomnia can contribute to health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Sleep problems, especially fatigue and daytime impairment, can compromise operational effectiveness.

Although sleep needs vary from person to person, it is recommended that adults get seven hours of sleep a day. Studies show that those who receive the recommended amount of sleep learn and retain information better, and outperform daily activities than those who are not rested.

Tips for Better Sleep

- Set a bedtime that is early enough for you to get at least 7 hours of sleep.
- Make your bedroom quiet and relaxing. Keep the room at a comfortable, cool temperature.
- Turn off electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Avoid consuming caffeine and alcohol late in the day before bed.
- Reduce your fluid intake before bedtime.

Tips for Sleeping after a Night Shift

When working a night shift, Sailors and Marines are required to stay alert and awake which can lead to restlessness and difficulty sleeping after their shift. A lack of sleep can lead to poor performance which, in the daily life of a Sailor and Marine, could result in serious consequences and impact fleet readiness. Traditional watch rotations, which do not account for circadian rhythm or sleep patterns, are a large contributor to fatigue, a common factor in many mishaps and near misses.



The 3/9 watch rotation was developed to solve several issues by building the schedule around the people that execute it and the mission that it supports. Below, find a few tips on working the night shift and maintaining proper sleep:

- Add naps to your daily routine, when possible, to increase your total sleep.
- Modify your schedule to accommodate meals when not on watch and schedule your routine meetings in between 0900 and 1500 when possible.
- In your bedroom, remove bright lights and sound distractions for better daytime sleep.
- Don't drink caffeine during the latter part of your shift so you can fall asleep more easily after.

Understanding Your Sleeping Pattern

Getting enough sleep is extremely important to the health and quality of life for Sailors and Marines. A lack of sleep can lead to fatigue which can lead to mishaps on duty. One way to understand sleeping patterns is to keep a sleep diary, helping to identify sleep drivers. See a doctor if you continue to have trouble sleeping. If you consistently find it difficult to fall or stay asleep and/or feel tired or not well rested during the day despite spending enough time in bed at night, you may have a sleep disorder. Your primary care provider can help you, and it is important to rule out other health concerns that may be disturbing your sleep.