

Avoid Musculoskeletal Injuries with Healthy Amounts of Sleep

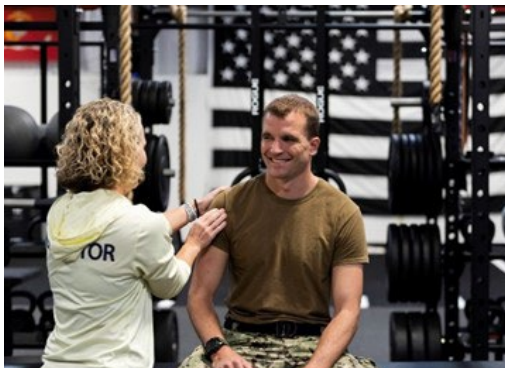
Immediate Impact

Lack of sleep has significant effects on overall health and well-being, and can result in decreased performance and a higher risk of musculoskeletal injury (MSKI).^{1,2,3} MSKIs are common muscle, joint, tendon/ligament and bone injuries that typically occur from physical training and sports.



*U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist
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Warfighters who slept four hours or less were more than twice as likely to experience a MSKI compared with those who slept eight or more hours.³ Sleep affects how our mind, bodies and emotions work—all of which are necessary for being fit and ready to perform job duties, military operations and missions. The harm to our bodies from sleep loss is like being drunk. It hinders your ability to communicate clearly, concentrate and make decisions. Memory, reaction time, balance, alertness and accuracy are all seriously impacted. Not getting enough sleep can also affect the ability to multitask and develop new motor skills.²



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Long-term Effects

Sleep deprivation is often due to job or school responsibilities, psychological reasons or chronic illnesses. In the military, night-shift work and ever-changing duty schedules may contribute to disrupted sleep patterns and insufficient rest time.⁴

Chronic lack of sleep negatively affects physical, cognitive and emotional functioning that can increase the risk of accidents in training, operational and combat environments.¹ Being sleep deprived can also have a negative effect on group performance and unit morale.²

Not getting enough sleep can cause:

- Reduced trust
- Mood imbalances
- Greater sensitivity to pain
- Slower recovery from injury
- Weaker immune system

Over time, sleep loss can increase the risk of:

- Hypertension
- Cardiovascular disease
- Obesity
- Type 2 diabetes
- Cancer

What Can You Do?

Being sleep deprived should not be viewed as a badge of honor. Getting enough sleep is vital to your overall physical, emotional and mental performance. Prioritize sleep in your daily schedule to allow for a minimum of seven hours per night.

Follow these sleep-boosting tips to decrease your risk for injury:^{1,2}

1. Exercise regularly to keep your muscles strong and flexible for better injury resistance. Physical activity can also improve sleep quality and make it easier to fall asleep.
2. Avoid watching TV, working, gaming and using electronic devices in bed. Good rest starts in a bedroom devoted solely to sleep.
3. Limit caffeine intake during the day and stop consuming any 4-6 hours before bedtime. It promotes wakefulness and can disrupt sleep.
4. Create a soothing sleep space. A cool (65-67 degrees Fahrenheit), dark (use darkening shades) and quiet room is ideal. If noise is an issue, consider the use of fans or ear plugs.
5. Keep a consistent sleep schedule. Set a fixed wake-up time and adjust your bedtime accordingly – don't forget about weekends.
6. Establish a bedtime routine. Try relaxing before bedtime to decompress and wind down.
7. Consider the use of apps that help you fall asleep and track time spent sleeping.
8. Talk with your doctor if you continue to experience persistent problems with poor sleep.

Sleep is essential for optimal functioning and is critical to success in the military. When you get the amount of sleep your body needs to rest and reset, you'll be mission-ready and at peak performance!

References

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