

Healthy sleep for first responders is essential for physical recovery, mental clarity, and overall well-being. Due to irregular shifts and high-stress environments, prioritizing quality sleep can help combat fatigue, improve performance, and reduce the risk of burnout or injury.

Healthy sleep habits are crucial for first responders to ensure optimal performance, recovery, and overall well-being.



Indicators of Sleep Disturbance

- Difficulty sleeping, falling asleep, or frequent waking
- Daytime fatigue, mood swings, and increased irritability
- Increased anxiety and stress
- Feeling tired upon waking
- Difficulty concentrating
- Forgetfulness

For more resources on wellness, visit our website



vafirstresponderwellness.org/resources

HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS

What does it mean?

Prioritize Consistent Sleep Schedules

Even with irregular shifts, try to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day to regulate your body's internal clock. Consistency helps maintain sleep quality and mental clarity.

Establishing a Pre-Sleep Routine

Establish a calming pre-sleep routine, such as stretching, deep breathing, or listening to soothing music. Avoid stimulating activities like using electronics or watching intense TV shows before bed.

Managing Stress Effectively

Job stress can interfere with sleep. Practice stress-relieving techniques like meditation, deep breathing, or journaling to calm your mind before bed. A warm bath can also help promote sleep.

Creating a Sleep-Friendly Environment

Make your sleep area as restful as possible by keeping it cool, dark, and quiet. Consider using blackout curtains or sleep masks to block light, and try earplugs or a white noise machine to reduce noise disturbances. Additionally, having physical comfort while sleeping—for example, using a comfortable pillow, mattress, and bedding that are inviting for sleep—can help create a sleep-friendly environment.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

Scan for more information
vafirstresponderwellness.org/about-us



CONTACT US

Chris Scuderi
Public Safety and Law Enforcement Training Coordinator
(804) 278-7054

Marc Dawkins
Law Enforcement and Public Safety Training Manager
(804) 380-9709

Email us at:
vafirstresponderwellness@dcjs.virginia.gov

HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS *(cont.)*

Strategies For Enhancing Healthy Sleep Habits

Limit Stimulants and Heavy Meals Before Bed

Avoid caffeine, nicotine, large meals, and exercise at least 4-6 hours before sleep. These can interfere with the ability to fall asleep or reduce sleep quality. Vigorous or intense exercise close to bed can interfere with the ability to fall and stay asleep.

Monitor Sleep and Health Patterns

Track your sleep habits, energy levels, and overall well-being to identify any patterns or issues. If sleep problems persist, consider consulting your healthcare provider to address underlying causes.

Practice Stress-Relief Techniques

Incorporate mindfulness, deep breathing, or journaling to manage stress before bed. These techniques can help reduce anxiety and allow the mind to relax, making it easier to sleep.

Strategic Napping

When necessary, take brief naps (15-30 minutes) during breaks or between shifts to recharge without disrupting your regular sleep cycle. Avoid napping for long periods, especially close to bedtime.

Prioritize Sleep Recovery

Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep, especially after physically demanding shifts. If this isn't always possible, consider strategic recovery sleep during off times to maintain physical and mental health.

Note: This information is provided in collaboration with NOTA Fitness.