

Physical wellness for first responders involves maintaining a strong, healthy body to effectively handle the physical demands of the job. Given the high-stress and physically demanding nature of emergency response work, regular exercise, proper rest, and injury prevention are essential for sustaining performance and promoting long-term health.



Indicators of Poor Physical Wellness

- Chronic fatigue and sleep disturbances
- Shortness of breath, discomfort, and cardiovascular strain
- Frequent illness or injury
- Muscle or joint stiffness, reduced range of motion, or pain
- Difficulty completing physically demanding tasks

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vafirstresponderwellness.org/resources

PHYSICAL WELLNESS

What does it mean?

Cardiovascular Fitness

Maintain your heart and lung health through regular aerobic exercise, such as running, cycling, or swimming. Cardiovascular fitness helps improve endurance, allowing first responders to stay prepared for physically demanding situations.

Strength Training

Build muscle strength through weightlifting or bodyweight exercises. Strength is crucial for tasks like lifting, carrying equipment, or helping others during rescues, and it helps prevent injuries by supporting joint health.

Flexibility and Mobility

Stretching and mobility exercises improve range of motion and reduce muscle stiffness. Maintaining flexibility helps first responders perform tasks with greater ease and reduces the risk of injury from sudden movements or physical strain.

Sleep and Rest

Getting adequate (7-9 hours), quality sleep allows muscles to repair, supports immune function, and ensures that first responders are mentally alert and physically ready for the demands of their job.

Injury Prevention and Recovery

Engaging in proper warm-up and cool-down routines, using protective gear, and employing good posture techniques helps prevent injury. Adequate rest and recovery, including regular stretching and post-shift recovery, are essential to allow the body to heal and stay in peak condition.

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PHYSICAL WELLNESS *(cont.)*

Strategies For Enhancing Physical Wellness

Regular Exercise Routine

Follow a balanced fitness routine with 150 minutes of moderate-intensity cardio per week and strength training 2-3 times per week. This builds endurance, strength, balance, and mobility for the physical demands of the job.

Stress Management Techniques:

Chronic stress can take a toll on physical health, so incorporating relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga can help lower stress levels. Regular physical activity itself is also a great stress reliever. Aim for at least 30 minutes of stress-relieving activity a day.

Rest and Listen to Your Body

Listen to your body's signals, like pain or fatigue. Rest is crucial to prevent injury and burnout, helping your body stay strong and resilient.

Monitor Health and Wellness Regularly

Schedule regular check-ups and fitness tests to track progress and address health concerns early. Monitor key metrics like blood pressure, weight, and heart rate to stay on top of wellness. Request regular bloodwork and age-appropriate preventative screenings.

Cross-Training and Functional Fitness

Focus on exercises that mimic the movements you perform in the field, such as lifting, carrying, or sprinting. Functional fitness training improves overall physical preparedness and helps build strength and coordination specific to the demands of your role.

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