

A Good Night's Sleep-

Your guide to good sleep health

You Are Not Alone

If you have trouble sleeping, you are not alone. More than one-third of adults have trouble sleeping at some time. Approximately 50% of Coast Guard personnel report they receive less than 7 seven hours of sleep most nights.

Like exercise and eating, everyone needs a different amount of sleep. The normal amount of sleep needed can range between 7 and 9 hours. Most adults require about 8 hours of sleep each night to perform at their best. Losing a couple hours of sleep for several nights creates a condition known as sleep debt that can lead to health problems. You cannot just ignore these missing hours. Sleep deprivation can lead to health conditions such as depression, high blood pressure, and muscle pain. It is also a known contributor in the early onset of kidney disease and diabetes, and plays a role in memory loss, lack of concentration, and poor judgment.

Women report insomnia more than men. Factors that can affect insomnia for women include physical discomfort during pregnancy; hormonal changes during the menstruation cycle, pregnancy, or menopause; or pain conditions such as migraines or tension headaches. Sleep apnea is a sleep disorder that more commonly affects men (although the accompanying snoring may also "affect" their sleep partner!); nevertheless, as women age, their likelihood of developing sleep apnea increases.

As we grow older our sleep patterns also change. We still need as much sleep as when we were younger, but the ability to achieve deep and uninterrupted sleep decreases. For many, this can cause anxiety about not getting enough sleep.

Troubled sleep takes three forms:

- 1- Having trouble falling asleep
- 2- Having trouble staying asleep
- 3- Waking up too early

Sleep Quiz: Questions to ask yourself

1. Do you have difficulty falling asleep most nights?
2. Have you been told that you snore loudly?
3. Has anyone noticed an interruption in your breathing while you sleep?
4. Has anyone told you that you are restless (e.g., move your legs or kick) while you sleep?
5. Do you wake up with pain or stiffness in your legs?
6. Do you feel depressed during the day (e.g., feelings of sadness)?
7. Do you feel under pressure or stressed often?
8. Do you find yourself needing to take one or more naps during the day?
9. Do you feel sleepy or fatigued during the day?

10. Do you wake up during the night and have trouble getting back to sleep?
11. Do you wake up too early and have trouble getting back to sleep?
12. Have you ever fallen asleep while driving or operating heavy machinery?

A “yes” answer to any of these questions is an indicator that you might have a sleep problem. Read on for more information.

Sleep Stoppers

There can be many reasons why you find it hard to get a good sleep. These may include the following:

Worry	Smoking
Stress	Caffeine
Depression	Alcohol/drugs
Eating too much/little	Exercise too close to bedtime
Not enough exercise	Illness
Watching the clock	

Poor sleep environment

Trying to fall asleep in a noisy, hot, or cold place can create a sleeping problem. An uncomfortable bed or a restless, noisy bed partner can also interfere with sleep. Your bedroom should be as dark as possible because the body naturally wakes up when exposed to light. The ideal sleep environment is a cool, dark, quiet room, below 19°C (68°F).

Lifestyle

An irregular schedule can lead to sleep problems, as can strenuous exercise or excitement one to three hours before bedtime. Using stimulants such as alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine or eating close to bedtime can also make it difficult to get to sleep or can cause disturbed sleep patterns once you have gone to sleep. While some people claim that alcohol helps them fall asleep, it is clinically proven that excessive alcohol depresses REM sleep, thereby reducing the benefits of deep sleep. Another growing concern is the use of computers just before going to bed. Internet users often find themselves engaged far beyond their planned bedtime and, as well, their minds are frequently stimulated into an active rather than a relaxed state, making it difficult to fall asleep.

Shift work

Shift workers may not leave themselves enough time to sleep after they finish their shift. Often normal daytime noise or daylight disrupts their sleep. Shift workers have to reset their "internal clocks" every time they go on a different shift, which can cause sleep loss.

Medications

Cold remedies, blood pressure medications, steroids, asthma medications, and antidepressants are just a few of the medications that can interfere with sleep. If you're

taking medications and are having trouble sleeping, ask your pharmacist or doctor if your medication could be involved in the problem.

Jet lag

Many people experience insomnia for a day or two after flying to a destination in a different time zone. Keep in mind that coffee, tea, and alcohol- common in-flight beverages- cause dehydration. Remain properly hydrated by drinking water or juices throughout the flight.

Medical problems

Medical problems can interfere with proper sleep. If you think your sleep problem may be caused by the symptoms of heart or bladder conditions, heartburn, or muscle pain, consult your doctor.

Sleep disorders

Snoring or difficulty breathing while asleep is often a sign of sleep apnea, a serious medical condition. Arm or leg movements while going to sleep or while actually asleep can also be symptoms of a medical problem. If you think you have a sleep disorder, consult your physician or a sleep specialist.

Caffeine intake

The food you eat may keep you awake at night. Caffeine is a common ingredient in coffee(60-180 mg), tea (20-110 mg), soft drinks (35-50 mg), and chocolate products. It is also present in many prescription and non-prescription medications, including headache and cold remedies, menstrual pain relief products, diet aids, and stimulant preparations. The table below shows the caffeine content of various food items.

The good news is that many of these things can be controlled with good sleep habits- sometimes called *sleep hygiene*.

Good Sleep Habits Help

It is important to recognize that sleep deprivation is a health hazard and preventing it must become a priority. The following tips and techniques can significantly improve the quality of your sleep and your ability to get to sleep.

Avoid caffeine.

Watch what you eat and drink.

Don't overeat just before going to bed. But you don't want to go to bed hungry either. Try a warm glass of milk or a *light* snack- like cheese and crackers- about 30 minutes before turning in.

Avoid alcohol.

Exercise regularly.

Limit the use of sleep medication.

Don't take sleeping pills for more than 10-14 days unless ordered by your doctor. Over time, sleeping pills can disturb your sleep pattern, making problems worse.

Don't smoke.

Nicotine is a stimulant and will keep you awake.

Practice regular relaxation and breathing exercises.

Bedtime is relaxation time! It's very hard to fall asleep when you're tense. If you're having trouble relaxing, it's worth exploring different relaxation methods at or just before

bedtime. Successful techniques could include progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, or light yoga. The idea is to ease physical muscular tension while letting your mind relax. This helps open the door to sleep.

Don't take naps during the day.

Long naps or naps too close to bedtime can interfere with your ability to sleep later that night. Try to stay awake and let your body have its rest during a full night's sleep.

Reserve the bedroom for sleep.

Avoid turning your bedroom into a multi-purpose computer room, TV lounge, and office. If you begin to associate your sleeping environment with work or leisure activities, you may find it harder to settle down when you actually go to bed.

If you can't sleep, get up.

If you haven't fallen asleep within 45 minutes of going to bed, get up and do something relaxing. Reading and listening to music are both good choices. Avoid computers, especially the Internet, which can provide too much stimulus.

Check Your Environment

Is it too cool or warm? Control your environment. If the temperature is uncomfortable it can disturb your sleep.

Is it quiet? Turn off sounds in your bedroom and home when you are ready to go to sleep. Sometimes you can't control the noise around you when you sleep. When that happens, wear earplugs, run a fan, or play soft music to drown out the noise.

Is it dark? Any light in your room can affect your sleep. Use dark shades on windows or wear eyeshades to block out as much light as you can.

Seek help.

If you have a sleeping problem that lasts more than a couple of weeks, call your doctor. Your physician can offer a variety of treatment approaches based on examination. If the cause of the disorder is still unknown discuss with your physician the possibility to be tested in a sleep lab. If you suspect the cause might be mental or psychological contact the Coast Guard Employee Assistance Program (800) 222-0364 for a free and confidential assessment.

Recipe of the Month

Vegetable Quiche

Makes: 6 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 3/4 cups cooked brown rice
- 2 tablespoons fat-free egg substitute or 2 egg whites
- 1 cup broccoli, chopped
- 3/4 cup corn
- 1/2 cup carrots, chopped
- 3 whole mushrooms, sliced

- 1/3 cup onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons cilantro, chopped
- 1 1/2 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup nonfat/lowfat grated cheese
- 1 cup nonfat evaporated milk
- 1 cup fat-free egg substitute or 8 egg whites
- 2 tablespoons grated nonfat/lowfat Parmesan cheese

Directions:

- To make the crust, combine rice and egg whites, and stir well. Coat pie pan with nonstick cooking spray (nonfat), and pat the crust mixture over bottom and sides of pan.
- Combine the remaining ingredients, stir well, and pour into crust.
- Bake at 375 degrees F for 45-50 minutes. Remove dish from oven, and let sit for 5-10 minutes.

Nutritional Information:

- Serving size: 1 slice (1/6 of quiche)
- Calories: 230
- Fat: 1.5 g
- Cholesterol: 10 mg
- Protein: 25 g
- Carbs: 29 g
- Fiber: 3.5 g
- Sodium: 350 mg

Coast Guard Unit of the Month: Station Rio Vista (CA)

The July 2004 Unit of the Month is Station Rio Vista, CA. With an ongoing commitment to Health Promotion from Officer in Charge BMCS Dawn Smith and Executive Petty Officer BM1 Steve Doty, Station Rio Vista has integrated wellness initiatives into a high tempo operational environment. Even with 500 to 600 SAR cases a year the command ensures that crew and individual stress levels are successfully managed. To this end, stress management training is conducted semi-annually. In the past year this included completing the Stress Map training conducted by the regional Health Promotion Manager. In addition, Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) training is conducted semi-annually and additional Critical Incident Stress debriefings are conducted as needed.

The most innovative health promotion initiative undertaken by Station Rio Vista is an annual station-wide Personal Wellness Profile (PWP) that has now been conducted for the last three years. With individual and group wellness baselines now established, individual PWP reports and the executive summary have been used to track progress and target wellness initiatives.

BM1 Doty attended the Health Promotion Coordinator course in 2002 and provides guidance and leadership to newly appointed unit HPC SN Jenai Miller who assumed HPC duties within the past couple of months.

The station conducts mandatory fitness training three times a week at the beginning of the workday. To maintain motivation and encourage progress the group activities are rotated seasonally. Quarterly fitness testing is also mandatory for all crewmembers. Once a quarter the unit conducts a “Wellness Stand-down.” This is a full day devoted to wellness activities, including education and fitness activities.

Well done, Station Rio Vista, for taking a proactive approach to maintain a focus on crew Wellness!

Special thanks to Dan Blaettler, Health Promotion Manager at ISC Alameda, for writing the Health Promotion Bulletin this month.



mailto: TSchneider@COMDT.uscg.mil



(202) 267-6624



(202) 267-4798



mailto: Dblaettler@D11.uscg.mil



(510) 437-2736



(510) 437-5996