



Sleep Problems

Sleeping problems after deployment are common. They can have a big effect on your health. They can affect your ability to function during the day. Work and family relationships may suffer.

What are some common causes of sleep problems?

Difficulty staying awake during the day is a sign of poor sleep. Sleep problems also include trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. This could be caused by:

- **Symptoms of physical problems.** Pain due to an injury can make it hard to sleep.
- **Stress or sadness.** Poor mental health can affect your sleep. You may have a hard time falling asleep. You may sleep too much.
- **Medicines.** Sleeping pills and cold medicines that you buy over-the-counter often cause problems. Your provider may prescribe a sleeping pill. Take the sleeping pill for only two or three nights in a row.

What you need to know

Everyone needs about 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Keep in mind; you might not be getting restful sleep.

- You feel tired during the day. People tell you that you look tired.
- You have trouble staying awake. You doze off while driving or watching TV.
- You have trouble concentrating at work, home, or school.
- You need to nap almost every day.
- You need caffeine to stay awake.

What are ways to get a restful sleep?

- **Stick to a routine.** Wake up at the same time each day. Go to bed at the same time each night.
- **Exercise every day.** Go for a walk outside. Natural light helps keep your sleep patterns normal. Stop exercising at least three hours before bedtime.
- **Get out of bed if you are not asleep in 15 to 30 minutes.** Go into another room and do something relaxing. Return to bed only when you're sleepy.
- **Set the mood for sleep.** Keep your bedroom quiet, dark and at a cool, comfortable temperature.

How can you promote better sleep?

- **Learn how to manage stress.** Try deep breathing and relaxation methods. Spend time with family and friends.
- **Avoid napping or nap for only 15 to 30 minutes during the daytime.** If you do nap, the early afternoon is best.
- **Eat foods and drinks that are free of caffeine.** Avoid coffee, tea, certain soft drinks and chocolate.
- **Avoid drinking alcohol close to bedtime.** Alcohol may help you fall asleep. However, it will cause you to wake up and be restless.

Tips for better sleep

- **Eat your dinner three hours before you go to bed.**
- **Drink a glass of warm milk before bedtime.**
- **Have a bedtime routine.** Take a warm bath before bedtime. Read a book or listen to soothing music.
- **Use your bed only for sleeping or sex.** Eat, read, work, or watch television in another room.

Talk with you provider about your health and sleep patterns

Keep track of your sleep pattern in a diary for **2 weeks**. This will help your healthcare provider understand your sleep problems. Include in your sleep diary the following:

- 1) How many times you wake up at night
- 2) Total number of hours you slept

- 3) How you rate the quality of your sleep
- 4) How you feel during the day (wide awake or tired).

When should you get help?

Sleep problems can lead to increased stress and depression. Some complaints may indicate that you have a serious condition. Contact your healthcare team right away if you have any of the following:

- Waking suddenly and acting strangely or confused
- Shortness of breath or chest pain
- Frequent, scary nightmares
- Jerking or kicking legs during sleep. These may be symptoms of periodic limb movement.
- Discomfort or tingling feelings in the legs at night. These may be symptoms of restless leg syndrome
- Loud snoring, choking, and gasping sounds during sleep. These may be symptoms of sleep apnea.



REMEMBER...

Sleeping problems after deployment are common. They can have a big effect on your health. They can affect your ability to function during the day. Trouble sleeping can be a symptom of a physical or mental problem. Wake up and go to bed at the same time each day. Having a routine will improve your sleep.

