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[Planning ahead for losing sleep](#)



Written by Mark Nichols

With the near-constant threat of terrorism, active shooters and good old-fashioned crimes of all types, it might be hard for cops to keep tabs on all the threats to their safety and well being. And as far as threats go, sleep-related health issues probably aren't going to keep too many public safety professionals up nights. But a recent medical study on the adverse health effects of shift work should be of serious interest to anyone that doesn't have the luxury of working regular hours.

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A new study finds that their schedule may cause cops to develop metabolic syndrome, a cluster of symptoms including high blood pressure, insulin resistance and high triglycerides. The syndrome advances the development of such conditions such as stroke, cardiovascular disease, and Type 2 Diabetes.

The research, published in the current issue of Archives of Environmental & Occupational Health, focused on 98 police officers who were part of the Buffalo Cardio-Metabolic Occupational Police Stress study, which began in 2003. The participants had their blood pressure checked, took a blood test and had their waistlines measured.

They also filled out a questionnaire focusing on lifestyle choices such as sleep habits, and physical activity, as well as things like smoking and drug and alcohol use. Researchers discovered that in general, those on afternoon and midnight shifts were younger than those working during the day.

Overall, 30 percent of the police officers on the night shift had metabolic syndrome. In the general population, that number was 21 percent according to the National Health and Nutritional Examination Survey. The younger officers on the night shift (average 36.5 years) also had higher rates of metabolic syndrome than age-matched men and women in the general population, who came in at 24 percent.

According to the results of the study the waist circumference was larger and HDL "good" cholesterol levels were lower among night shift cops compared to the general population and to officers working day and evening shifts. Officers working nights who got less than six hours of sleep had higher averages of metabolic syndrome factors than day shift workers did. "

One potential explanation for this unusual finding is that midnight shift officers were most likely to be sleep deprived because of difficulties associated with day sleeping," said John Violanti, the study's lead author, in a news release.

The research associate professor at the University of Buffalo's department of social and preventive medicine added, "Sleep debt has been shown to have a harmful impact on carbohydrate metabolism and endocrine function, which could contribute to metabolic disorders."

In the study, the authors wrote, "Information gained through this study may be useful to aid further investigation of not only police officer health, but also the health of those in other first-responder occupations."

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