

HOMELESSNESS AND SLEEP

SLEEPING WITHOUT A HOME

It's difficult to sleep if you don't have a home. It's especially difficult to sleep deeply when you have no way to secure your personal belongings and you're worried about your personal safety. Unfortunately, this describes what sleeping is like for persons in homelessness.

Traditionally, emergency shelters are designed provide a place to sleep for the night. While they provide shelter from environmental hazards such as vermin and extreme weather, they're not necessarily safe, and they're certainly not conducive to sleep.



70% of those sleeping in shelters said they felt so tired they couldn't function normally the following day.

- National Health Care for the Homeless Council.

SLEEP DEPRIVATION

Sleep deprivation for even just a night or two can vastly affect your productivity and mental processing. Imagine what sleeping for varying amounts in strange environments over several days does to your body, your circadian rhythms, and your mind. It wreaks havoc on your system. Unfortunately, this is the case for people in homelessness.

The average adult needs 6 to 9 hours of sleep per night. By contrast, people experiencing homelessness report getting as little as 3.5 hours of sleep per night. Often, that sleep is interrupted for a variety of reasons, so it's rare to have truly restful sleep when living without a home.

THE EFFECTS OF SLEEP DEPRIVATION

The effects of long-term sleep deprivation are serious. It deprives your body of the ability to rest your mind and your organs and revitalize itself. Chronic sleep deprivation increases your risk for: obesity and diabetes, Schizophrenia-like symptoms, violent and aggressive behavior, and memory loss.

Sleep deprivation worsens symptoms of mental illness. Insomnia can lead to depression.

People suffering from PTSD, whether a veteran, a victim of sexual or physical assault, or another traumatic reason or event that may have led to their homelessness, often have difficulty sleeping. They're living with paranoia and fear, and are more likely to have nightmares.

Since sleep deprivation makes it more difficult to think clearly, it's even harder to get a job. Over time, a vicious cycle emerges that makes it more challenging for persons experiencing homelessness to transition to a more stable living environment... let alone consider choices that will lead to life transformation.

