



EFFECTS OF EXTENDED DAYLIGHT AND DARKNESS

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

OBJECTIVES



Participants will learn:

- Possible effects of extended periods of sunlight and darkness
- The causes of these effects
- Coping strategies



AGENDA

- Midnight Sun/Polar Nights
- Effects of Midnight Sun
- Managing Effects of Midnight Sun
- Effects of Polar Nights
- Managing Effects of Polar Nights
- When to Seek Help
- Summary



MIDNIGHT SUN/POLAR NIGHTS

- Midnight sun occurs in summer and is a phenomenon where the sun is visible for 24 hours a day
- Polar night is the opposite of midnight sun and occurs in winter when the sun stays below the horizon throughout the day
- Countries affected by this are Canada, the U.S. (Alaska), Norway, Sweden, Finland, Greenland, Russia and parts of Iceland
- This presentation will focus on the effects of these phenomena and how to manage those effects



EFFECTS OF MIDNIGHT SUN

Visitors and newcomers to the regions that experience midnight sun typically have the most difficulty

Possible effects can include:

- Sleep disturbance
- Hyperactivity
- Fatigue
- Irritable mood



MANAGING EFFECTS OF MIDNIGHT SUN

- Keep daily routines as much as possible
- Have dark drapes in your bedroom
- Wear a sleep mask
- Practice relaxation exercises
- Maintain a healthy diet
- Exercise



EFFECTS OF POLAR NIGHTS

Possible effects of polar nights may include:

- Feelings of sadness
- Detachment from people and activities
- Lack of energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sleeping more than usual
- Difficulty staying awake
- Cravings for carbohydrates and weight gain



MANAGING EFFECTS OF POLAR NIGHTS

- Stay active and maintain your daily schedule
- Eat a balanced diet and reduce consumption of simple carbohydrates
- Exercise
- Develop a support network and spend time with family and friends
- Consider specialized lighting to simulate outdoors but only with permission from your doctor



CRAVING CARBOHYDRATES

There is a reason carbohydrate cravings increase in the winter months:

- A lack of sunlight affects brain chemicals that help improve mood, energy and sleep
- These brain chemicals are reduced during periods of extended darkness and for some this can adversely affect mood, energy level and sleep
- Carbohydrates help to increase the same brain chemicals as sunlight does



CRAVING CARBOHYDRATES

CONTINUED

The trick is to eat the right carbohydrates

Simple carbohydrates include:

- Sweets made with refined sugar
- Breads and pasta made with white flour
- Cakes and all baked goods made with white flour
- Soda
- Fruit juice



Complex carbohydrates (the better choice) include:

- Raw vegetables and fruit
- Whole grain breads and baked goods
- Raw nuts
- Beans



WHEN TO SEEK HELP

- Even though most people will adjust to the environments with extended daylight and darkness, some people will have more difficulty.
- If you believe that the effects of midnight sun and polar nights are affecting your work and/or personal life, you may want to seek outside help from your personal physician, Military Community Services or Behavioral Health Services



SUMMARY

- The effects of extended lightness and darkness can affect mood, sleep cycles and energy levels
- When it is light, the brain expects to be alert, and when it is dark, the brain expects to sleep
- During extended periods of light and dark, the brain becomes confused and doesn't know whether to sleep or be alert
- Coping methods include keeping daily routines, maintaining a healthy diet and exercising
- Seek help if the effects of extended lightness and darkness interfere with personal or work functioning





QUESTIONS?



RESOURCES

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE www.Tricare.mil
- Behavioral Health Services



REFERENCES

- *All about SAD: How a Good Diet Can Help SAD*,
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<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10532242/from/RSS/>
- *Why You Crave Carbs in the Winter*,
<http://simplehealthadvice.com/why-you-crave-carbs-in-the-winter/>



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THANK YOU