



July Health Promotion Toolbox

Fruits and Vegetables Month

Message for Commanding Officers

Consuming the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables daily helps decrease the risk of various chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and type-2 diabetes.¹ The antioxidants in colorful fruits and vegetables are sources of essential nutrients that are often under consumed, and which help reduce cholesterol, boost the immune system, and decrease bone loss.¹ In addition, eating more nutrient dense foods, such as fruits and vegetables, is an effective means to lose weight.² Fruits and vegetables contain a high amount of fiber, which adds volume to your meals so you feel full while consuming less calories.²

According to the 2014 Fleet and Marine Corps Health Risk Assessment Annual Report, low consumption of fruits and vegetables is one of the leading health risks Sailors and Marines face.³ Among active duty Sailor respondents, 39 percent indicated they did not eat at least two servings of fruit a day and 36 percent reported they did not eat at least three servings of vegetables a day.³ Of the active duty Marine respondents, 44 percent were not eating at least two servings of fruit per day and 68 percent were not eating three or more servings of vegetables a day.³

Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables helps Sailors, Marines, retirees, and civilian personnel get the essential nutrients that only these foods can provide, helping prevent chronic disease. Access the tools and resources by clicking on the blue, underlined, hyperlinked text throughout the document. By incorporating these tips into meal planning, Sailors, Marines, retirees, and civilian personnel can access the resources they need to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into their diet in order to maintain optimal health and performance.

What Can Leadership Do?

As a commanding officer, you play an important role in promoting fruit and vegetable consumption among your Sailors and/or Marines:

- Establish a “healthy food policy” for command events which includes plenty of fruits and vegetables by following the [American Cancer Society guidance for healthier eating at work](#).
- Reference the [Activity Guide](#) to identify activities that will help your command develop eating habits that incorporate the daily recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables.



- Support fruit and vegetable intake by making fruits and vegetables available at snack bars and shops at your local command.

You can work with your Health Promotion Coordinator to:

- Challenge your command to complete [the 30-Day Fruit and Veggie Challenge](#).
- Have your command determine their individual recommended daily number of servings of fruits and vegetables with the quick [fruits and vegetables calculator](#).
- Bust some fruit and vegetable myths and teach your command about the [importance of eating fruits and vegetables](#).
- Encourage your command to eat a [variety of different colors of fruits and vegetables](#) to get the most out of their food.
- Introduce your command to [farmers markets and community gardens](#) so they can access fresh, local, and in season produce.
- Let your command know they can stick to their food budget when they follow these tips to [access affordable fresh fruits and vegetables](#).
- Help your Sailors and Marines buy more produce when they grocery shop and avoid unhealthy snacks with these [tips for maneuvering through the grocery store](#) for the wounded, ill, and injured (WII).
- Inform your command about fruit and vegetable serving sizes so they meet their daily requirements with this [Size Up Your Servings](#) infographic.
- Supplements do not replace eating fruits and vegetables. Share this [dietary supplements fact sheet](#) to let your command know why.
- Varying lifestyles mean different nutritional needs. Help your Sailors and Marines [eat healthy for their lifestyle](#).
- Improve your command's access to fruits and vegetables by using the tips provided by the [Defense Commissary Agency \(DeCA\) "Healthy Living"](#) at your local commissary.

References

¹ Why is it important to eat fruit? United States Department of Agriculture.

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/fruits-why.html>. Accessed April 2015.

² Healthy Weight – it's not a diet, it's a lifestyle. United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/fruits_vegetables.html. Updated July 2012. Accessed April 2015.

³ Fleet and Marine Corps Health Risk Assessment 2014. Navy Marine Corps Public Health Center EpiData Center Department. <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/health-promotion-wellness/general-tools-and-programs/HRA-2014-report-final.pdf>. Prepared May 2015. Accessed May 2015.