



# July – Fruits and Vegetables Month

## A Message for Commanding Officers

The Navy and Marine Corps Health Promotion Programs focus on improving the nutritional fitness of our military personnel and their families. We know that eating a variety of fruits and vegetables helps Sailors, Marines and their families get the essential vitamins and minerals that only these foods can provide, supporting them in maintaining optimal health and performance. We look forward to your support of this important health topic.

Research indicates that increasing nutrient dense foods, such as fruits and vegetables, is an effective means to weight loss. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, over two-thirds of the U.S. population does not meet the recommendation for fruit and vegetable consumption. In addition to supporting weight loss, consuming the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables daily also helps decrease the risk of various diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and type-2 diabetes.

Sailors and Marines may be struggling with **weight issues** that can jeopardize successful military careers. Dietary habits among active duty military members that can affect military readiness include skipping breakfast on a regular basis, consuming too many calorie-dense foods from fast foods and vending machines, and relying on dietary supplements to beat hunger for the sake of losing a few pounds or improving performance. Promoting eating fruits and vegetables can be the answer to these common issues: keep breakfast simple by having a breakfast smoothie or a piece of fruit; fill up on high water content fruits such as melons and citrus instead of a trip to the vending machine; and finally fruits and vegetables have many powerful substances like phytochemicals that make them a great choice over supplements.

**Navy and Marine Corps leadership support is critical to the success of promoting the increased consumption of fruits & vegetables.** Strategies to support this initiative are:

- Establish a “healthy food policy” for command events which includes plenty of fruits and vegetables. Guidelines can be found at: [http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/downloads/healthy\\_worksite\\_food.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/downloads/healthy_worksite_food.pdf)
- Recommend that every service member at your command determine their individual recommended number of daily servings of fruits and vegetables, which can be found at: <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/>
- Support the Fit Pick™ NEXCOM vending program by encouraging them to add fresh or dried fruits and vegetables to the vending machines at your command
- Support the DeCA “Healthy Choices for Life” program at your local commissary
- Assess your command’s nutrition environment by completing the m-Neat Assessment which can be found at: <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/healthy-eating/Pages/m-neat.aspx>