



# March Health Promotion Toolbox

## Healthy Eating Month

### Message for Commanding Officers

Results from the 2013 Fleet and Marine Corps Health Risk Assessment indicated that 50 percent of active duty Navy respondents are overweight and 14 percent are obese.<sup>1</sup> Active duty respondents from the Navy reported the highest percentage of obesity when compared to the Navy Reserves, Marine Corps, Marine Corps Reserves, the Coast Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserves.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, among active duty Sailor respondents, 40 percent indicated they did not eat at least two servings of fruit per day and 66 percent reported they did not eat at least three servings of vegetables per day.<sup>1</sup> Active duty Marine respondents demonstrated that 46 percent were not eating at least two servings of fruit per day and 72 percent were not eating three or more servings of vegetables per day.<sup>1</sup>



March is National Nutrition Month<sup>®</sup>, an annual public education campaign created and sponsored by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. This year's theme is "Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle," encouraging the public to improve their diet and exercise habits to maintain a healthy weight and promote overall health. Healthy lifestyles include consuming fewer calories, making informed foods choices, and exercising daily.

During National Nutrition Month<sup>®</sup>, help your Sailors, Marines, and civilian personnel "Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle" by sharing resources that teach them about nutrition and show them how to develop healthier eating habits that will contribute to their overall wellness, physical fitness, and mission readiness. Access the tools and resources by clicking on the blue, underlined hyperlinked text throughout the document.

### What Can Leadership Do?

**As a commanding officer, you play an important role promoting healthy eating lifestyle behaviors among your Sailors, Marines, and civilian personnel:**

- Reference the ["Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle" activity guide](#) to find activities that will help your command develop healthier eating habits, such as developing a "Wall of Fame"



with pictures of Sailors, Marines, and civilian personnel who have started eating healthier and incorporated exercise into their daily routine.

### You can work with Health Promotion Coordinators and Command Fitness Leaders to:

- Help Sailors, Marines, and civilian personnel learn about all the different types of fruits and vegetables available to them in fresh, frozen, dried, juice, or canned forms, and about serving sizes by challenging them to a [30-Day Fruit and Veggie Challenge](#).
- Encourage Sailors, Marines and civilian personnel to eat fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables of different colors boost different functions in the body, and individuals should eat at least three colors each day.<sup>2</sup> Help them get started with [Eat the Rainbow—A Colorful Approach to Healthy Eating](#).
- Let Sailors, Marines, and civilian personnel know that healthy eating can be easy, fun, and rewarding when they [master flavorful cooking](#).
- Help Sailors, Marines, and civilian personnel better understand the factors that contribute to eating habits by challenging them to track their hunger, food intake, and mood for one week using the [Tracker to Identify Your Food Triggers](#).
- Teach Sailors, Marines, and civilian personnel to practice mindful eating. When they are aware of what they are eating, they will most likely make better food choices. Share [Eating with Food in Mind](#) to get them started.
- Think about how Sailors', Marines', and civilian personnel's lifestyle impacts their diet. Healthy eating behaviors differ for different lifestyles so teach how to [eat healthy for their lifestyle](#).
- Show wounded, ill, or injured Sailors and/or Marines how to [maneuver through their grocery store and avoid aisles with junk food](#) in order to support their recovery and healing.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Navy Marine Corps Public Health Center EpiData Center Department. Fleet and Marine Corps Health Risk Assessment 2013. <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/health-promotion-wellness/general-tools-and-programs/HRA2013-annual-report.pdf>. Published 2014. Accessed December 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Navy Marine Corps Public Health Center. "Eat the Rainbow – A Colorful Approach to Healthy Eating." <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/ReproMaterial-Eat-the-Rainbow.aspx>. Accessed January 2015.