



Health Promotion Toolbox  
[http://www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/Healthy\\_Living/](http://www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/Healthy_Living/) then click on Resources and Products and then March-National Nutrition Month

## **March – “National Nutrition Month<sup>®</sup>”**

### A Message for Commanding Officers

Just as high octane fuel is important for Navy jets, healthy eating is just as important when it comes to fueling the human body. To ensure optimal physical performance, fitness and health, Sailors and Marines must maintain a healthy body weight and proper body fat percentage.

According to a research study published in the November/December 2007 issue of the American Journal of Health Promotion, unhealthy lifestyles are significant contributors to the cost of providing healthcare services to the nation’s military personnel, military retirees and their dependents. The study further states that the continued rise in healthcare costs could impact other DoD programs and could potentially affect areas related to military capability and readiness. The three health risks that were examined in the study were tobacco use, high alcohol consumption and being overweight or obese. Poor eating habits and the lack of regular physical activity are the major lifestyle behaviors contributing to individuals being overweight or obese.

Reports of military members frequently skipping breakfast, consuming too many calorie dense foods from fast food restaurants and vending machines, and relying on dietary supplements to beat hunger for the sake of losing a few pounds are all being reported as high risk eating behaviors. Results from the 2008 DoD Survey of Health Behaviors Among Military Personnel indicated that 62.7 percent of Navy military personnel are overweight and 14.3 percent are obese. The Navy is reporting the highest percentages in both categories when compared with the other branches of service and the entire DoD (60.2 percent and 12.6 percent respectively). Additionally, among all military personnel only 12.7 percent and 14.2 percent have reported eating at least three servings of fruits and vegetables respectively, as compared with the nation’s 2010 objective of 75 percent and 50 percent respectively.

You can find out how your own command compares to these numbers by having at least 50 percent of your command personnel complete the Navy and Marine Corps Health Risk Appraisal (NMCHRA), available on the NMCPHC website at: [http://www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/Healthy\\_Living/General/healthriskassessment.aspx](http://www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/Healthy_Living/General/healthriskassessment.aspx) and then having your NMCHRA Command Administrator create a Commanding Officer’s Report for your review. In addition to reviewing the percent of individuals at your command who are at risk for having a high BMI, you will also be able to determine the percent of your command’s personnel who are at risk for eating too much high fat foods and too little fruits and vegetables daily.

March is National Nutrition Month<sup>®</sup> (NNM). NNM is an annual nutrition education and information campaign created and sponsored by the American Dietetic Association

(ADA). National Nutrition Month® was initiated in March 1973 as a week-long event. "National Nutrition Week" became a month-long observance in 1980 in response to growing public interest in nutrition. The campaign is designed to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

Join our efforts to promote the National Nutrition Month® theme, *"Get Your Plate in Shape"*, which encourages consumers to remember to make half their plates fruits and vegetables, make half their grains whole, switch to fat-free or low-fat milk, vary their protein choices, cut back on sodium and empty calories, enjoy their food but eat less and to be physically active every day by directing your command Health Promotion Coordinator to use the resources from this month's Toolbox. You can play an important part in ensuring that personnel at your command are given the opportunity to gain the knowledge and receive the tools they need to make healthy food choices. Your leadership in encouraging your command personnel to make healthy food choices benefits not only the individual, but the entire military population.

