

NAVY MEDICINE FEMALE FORCE READINESS  
CLINICAL COMMUNITY



# Lifestyle and Performance Medicine Resource

*Information on lifestyle and performance  
medicine practices for service members to  
optimize their health and female force  
readiness.*

SEPTEMBER 2024

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**DISCLAIMER** | *The views presented in this resource do not reflect those of the Department of Defense and any medical information is not intended to replace advice from a professional health care provider. Any mention of specific apps or products does not indicate endorsement but is meant for an example that has worked for others.*

# What Is Lifestyle Performance Medicine?

Lifestyle and performance medicine is an evidence-based approach to preventing, treating, and even reversing diseases by replacing unhealthy behaviors with positive ones —such as eating healthfully, being physically active, managing stress, avoiding risky substance abuse, receiving adequate sleep, and having a strong support system.



*Image from the American College of Lifestyle Medicine*

*Lifestyle and performance medicine is categorized into six different key focus areas: healthful eating, physical activity, stress management, relationship formation/maintenance, sleep, and avoidance of risky substances.*

*This resource provides critical information aligned to each of the six focus areas to improve your health.*

# Nutrition Considerations

**General Nutrition Recommendations** | Service members should adopt a **largely plant-based diet** (e.g. minimally processed vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds). Plant-based diets limit harm to the environment while providing more complete nutrition. Additionally, these diets prevent, treat, and reverse chronic diseases.

**Foods Service Members Should Incorporate into Diet** | Service members can integrate the following foods into their diet:

- **Vegetables** (e.g., leafy greens, garlic, onions, peppers, leeks, parsnips, potatoes, radishes, turnips, squash, green beans, tomatoes, carrots, corn, peas, cauliflower, broccoli, cucumbers, eggplant, mushrooms)
- **Fruits** (e.g., bananas, apples, kiwi, oranges, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, mango, cantaloupe, watermelon, honeydew, plums, pineapple)
- **Legumes** (e.g., beans, lentils, soybean)
- **Whole Grains** (e.g., quinoa, rice (brown, black, white), barley, oats, whole grain pasta/tortilla/bread, couscous, teff, wheat germ)
- **Nuts** (e.g., almonds, peanuts, pistachios, cashews, Brazil nuts, soy nuts, hazelnuts, walnuts)
- **Seeds** (e.g., chia, flax, hemp, pumpkin, sunflower)

**Foods Service Members Should Avoid in Diet** | Service members should limit the intake of the following foods:

- **Sugary drinks (soda, juice cocktails, sweetened coffee, and energy drinks)**
- **Processed Meats** (sausage, bacon, salami, bologna, deli meat)
- **Processed Snacks** (crackers, chips, pretzels)
- **Cakes, pastries, sweets**
- **Dairy** (high fat with added salt or sugar)
- **Red Meats**
- **Poultry; Eggs**

**Consequences of Low-Calorie Intake** | Low energy availability in service members (intaking less calories than necessary for the body to function) can lead to:

- Menstrual cycle changes/amenorrhea (issues with fertility)
- Bone density loss (increased likelihood of fracture, bone stress reactions)
- Iron deficiency (energy levels, decreased thyroid function, poor bone health)
- Negative cardiovascular effects (symptomatic bradycardia (slow heart rate), arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat), hypertension (high blood pressure))
- Post-menopausal symptoms (endothelial dysfunction (irregular functioning of blood vessels), poor lipid profiles (increases risk of heart disease and stroke))
- Immunologic dysfunction (fecal incontinence, constipation, urinary incontinence)

# Sleep Considerations

**Importance of Sleep** | Sleep plays a huge role in overall health. Lack of sleep has been linked to obesity, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, poor mental health, and early death.

**Recommended Amount of Sleep for Service Women** | The average woman sleeps for **8 hours and 27 minutes per night**, which is 11 more minutes on average compared to men. Women are more likely to develop insomnia, restless leg syndrome, and sleep apnea (after age 50; often comes because of menopause).

**Consequences of Poor Sleep** | Service members who do not receive proper sleep can face the following effects:

- Low attention span
- Decreased drive to be social
- Depressed mood
- Decreased caloric burn
- Increased hunger; decreased insulin resistance
- Decreased performance

**Common Disrupters of Sleep** | The following can cause sleep disruption for service members:

- Overeating close to bedtime
- Blue light
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Stress/anxiety
- Naps during the day
- Extreme temperatures (too hot, too cold)
- Lack of sun exposure during the day
- Medications/medical conditions
- Physical disruptions in bed (partner, pet)

**Steps to Improve Sleep Quality** | The following methods can decrease sleep disruption and improve sleep quality for service members:

- Use bed for sleeping only
- Create a [sleep hygiene schedule](#) (e.g. develop a bedtime routine, determine consistent time to go to sleep, etc)
- Minimize/eliminate noise and lights in bedroom
- Increase exposure to sunlight during the day
- Move at least every hour during the day
- Eliminate nighttime caffeine and limit daytime caffeine
- Avoid alcohol within 3 hours of bedtime
- Eliminate/limit after-dinner snacking
- Maintain healthy BMI
- Stay hydrated

# Exercise Considerations

## EXERCISE RECOMMENDATIONS



It is recommended that **service members complete the following exercise combination:**

- 150-300 minutes per week of moderate intensity activity
- 75-150 minutes per week of vigorous intensity activity
- Strength training 2+ days/week

## Activities for Varying Intensity Levels

### Moderate Activity Exercises

Brisk Walking  
Heavy Cleaning  
Mowing Lawn  
Light Bicycling  
Recreational Badminton

### Vigorous Activity Exercises

Hiking  
Jogging  
Shoveling  
Carrying Heavy Loads  
Basketball/Soccer

## Self-Care Tips for Service Members

### HEALTH, DIET, & WELLNESS

- Get plenty of sleep
- Exercise regularly
- Focus on nutrition and maintaining a healthy diet
- Drink plenty of water
- Listen to your body
- Respect your emotions
- Keep a gratitude journal or write about stressful events
- Take care of spiritual needs

### COMMUNITY-BUILDING & ACTIVITIES

- Connect with others (cultivating interpersonal relationships)
- Get involved in new activities
- Keep a routine
- Try different healthy ways to relax (music, exercise, dance, meditation or yoga)
- Find time to laugh (comedy, joke books, etc.)

# Social Connections and Stress Management Considerations

## SOCIAL CONNECTIONS CONSIDERATIONS



***What family/social connection considerations are critical for lifestyle and performance medicine?***

Social connections and relationships affect our physical, mental, and emotional health. **Research shows that the single most important predictor of human happiness and long life is having strong social connections.** Health-related measures like blood pressure and heart rate improve even with short, positive social interactions. Below are some tips that may help you create and keep important connections in your life.

***What steps can service women employ to strengthen their social connections?***

- Connect with people during the week
- When possible, stay positive while connecting with others
- Share new experiences
- Make and spend time with others
- Be there for those who need you
- Be flexible, supportive, and excited about what others are doing in their lives

## STRESS MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS



***How can service members think about dealing with stress?***

Stress is unavoidable. **How we think about stress and how we react to it makes the difference in how it impacts our self-care and our health.** While some medicine may help to manage stress, there are many things that you can do to manage stress and improve your overall health. Partnering with your healthcare team can help you determine a plan of action for stress reduction. Ask your healthcare team about Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

***Good vs. Bad Stress***

Not all stress is bad for us; in fact, some stress can be helpful for completing important projects, studying for an exam, speaking in public, or accomplishing challenging goals. On the other hand, distress or negative stress is the type of stress that can cause short- or long-term anxiety, decreased performance, and lead to poor mental and physical health. Distress can be caused by many factors that differ for everyone. **It is important to recognize the things in your life that cause distress, so you can develop a plan to manage, cope with, or view situations differently.**

# Risky Behaviors Considerations

**METHODS TO AVOID RISKY BEHAVIORS** | **Tobacco use and excessive drinking increases the risk of many chronic diseases and death.** Therefore, avoiding risky substances is important. Some treatments work for alcohol abuse, but treatments often take time, different approaches and many attempts. **Giving yourself patience and getting support from others is an important part of reaching your goals.**

**GOALS TO IMPLEMENT TO AVOID RISKY SUBSTANCES** | SMART goals help develop clear methods to achieve changes. **Setting goals around substance use (tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs) is a great way to start making changes.** An example of a goal is, "I will swap my morning cigarette with chewing gum at least five days this week for the next four weeks. I will ask my partner to help keep me on track and use a free texting service (313-217-3821) for more support."

**SMART GOALS** | SMART Goals are objectives that meet the five following criteria:

1. **Specific** - What are you going to do to decrease your substance use?
2. **Measurable** - How much will you reduce it by?
3. **Achievable** - Do you have what it takes to follow through?
4. **Realistic** - What can you do to meet your goals?
5. **Time-Bound** - How long will you have these goals? How long will you commit?

## REFERENCES

1. [Navy Nutrition](#)
2. [HPRC's Get into Fighting Weight: A Total Force Fitness Guide](#)
3. [Sleep Foundation](#)
4. [MWR Network](#)
5. [Fleet and Family Readiness](#)
6. [Chaplains Religious Enrichment Development Operation \(CREDO\) Offices](#)  
[Military One Source](#)
7. [Sexual Assault Prevention and Response \(SAPR\)](#)