



Health Promotion Toolbox

August: Preventive Health Month

Message for Commanding Officers

Flossing once a day, eating the recommended number of servings from the five food groups, limiting high fat foods, and sleeping for seven or more hours each night can provide a range of health benefits and prevent illness. Regular flossing can decrease one's risk for gum disease and cavities.¹ Eating the recommended number of servings from the five food groups (fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein) helps Sailors and Marines get the nutrients they need to maintain health and perform at their peak. Sailors and Marines should get seven or more hours of restful sleep each night because lack of sleep can create cognitive dysfunction, motor skill interruption, and increase risk for illness.³

Yet, according to recent Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Workplace Health Risk Assessment (HRA) Annual Reports, many active duty Sailor and Marine respondents are not engaging in these behaviors regularly.

Flossing, eating the recommended number of servings from the five food groups, and getting seven hours of sleep or more each day can reap health benefits and potentially prevent illness. Help your Sailors, Marines, and DoD civilian personnel learn about these preventive health measures they should adopt for optimum health and performance. Access and share 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 in promoting preventive health practices among your Sailors and/or Marines:

- Challenge your command to complete the 21-day [1-5-7 Wellness Objective of the Day \(WOD\) Challenge](#). Take the challenge yourself and model these preventive health behaviors for your command. For example, you can swap out your normal dessert for a bowl of fresh fruit, floss your teeth after lunch, and avoid caffeine after 3 p.m.
- Establish a “healthy food policy” for command events by following the [American Cancer Society's guidance for healthier eating at work](#).
- Support fruit and vegetable intake and flossing by making fruits, vegetables, and floss available at snack bars and shops at your local command.



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- Post this [How to Floss](#) poster in snack bars, dining halls, locker rooms, and restrooms at your command.
- Educate your command about talking to their dentist about healthy brushing, flossing, and oral hygiene at their next dental check-up.

You can work with Health Promotion Coordinators to:

- Share these [strategies for shaping healthy habits](#) with your command so they can learn how to incorporate preventive health practices into their daily routine.
- Inform your command about why they should [brush and floss daily](#).
- Getting [quality sleep](#) is important. But if your Sailors and Marines can't get at least eight hours of sleep, encourage them to take a [power nap](#) to restore energy, reduce fatigue, and improve your mood.
- Make sure your command knows that just one night of sleep deprivation can impact judgement, reaction times, complex problem solving, and the ability to recognize your level of impairment [as much as alcohol intoxication](#).
- Educate your wounded, ill, and injured Sailors and/or Marines that [sleep speeds recovery](#) and that a [sleep schedule](#) can help them get a better night's rest.
- Your Sailors and Marines can reduce stress and sleep better through deep relaxation. Share the [Relax Relax toolkit](#) so they can get started.
- Encourage your command to eat a [variety of different colors of fruits and vegetables](#) to get the most out of their food.
- Educate your command about fruit and vegetable serving sizes so they meet their daily requirements with this [Size Up Your Servings](#) infographic.
- Help your command say no to high-fat foods with these [tips and tricks for making healthy food taste better](#).
- Supplements do not replace eating a balanced meal from the five food groups. Share this [dietary supplements infographic](#) to explain why.

References

¹ Flossing. American Dental Association. <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/f/flossing>.

² Dietary supplements: What you need to know. National Institutes of Health: Office of Dietary Supplements. http://ods.od.nih.gov/pubs/DS_WhatYouNeedToKnow.pdf. Reviewed June 2011.

³ Sleep and Sleep Disorders. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/sleep/index.html>. Updated March 2017.

⁴ Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Workplace Health Risk Assessment Annual Reports. Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center EpiData Center Department. <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/hra.aspx>.