



Health Promotion Toolbox

October: Women's Health Month

Message for Commanding Officers

Maintaining mission readiness means taking charge of one's overall health. When Sailors and Marines adopt healthier lifestyle behaviors they increase their operational readiness and also improve their overall health.

Some health concerns affect women differently than men. While heart disease and cancer are both leading causes of death for men and women in the United States, chronic lower respiratory diseases are one of the top three leading causes of death in women, but not men.¹ When women are aware of health concerns specific to women, they can take better care of themselves. As an example, women have different body shapes and may store fat in different areas of their body.² Women who store body fat in their waist area may have a higher risk of weight-related health problems such as diabetes and high blood pressure.² Women who are aware of this understand the importance of taking measures to maintain a healthy weight. Female Sailors, Marines, and DoD civilians should take charge of their health and adopt healthy living habits that include eating healthy, being active, maintaining a healthy weight, managing stress, staying injury free, practicing safe sex, drinking in moderation, and being tobacco free.

During Women's Health Month, share resources that teach your female Sailors, Marines, and DoD civilians how to make healthier choices across the spectrum of women's health topics. Access the tools and resources by clicking on the blue, underlined hyperlinked text throughout the document. They'll become more knowledgeable about how their behaviors and lifestyle choices affect their overall health, so that they can take steps now to improve their health for years to come!

What Can Leadership Do?

As a commanding officer, you play an important role in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors among your female Sailors and/or Marines:

- Reference the Activity Ideas for resources about women's health, and tips on how to educate your command about women's health topics.
- Being active can improve mental function, reduce waist size, and lower some cancer risks.³ Encourage Command Fitness Leaders to empower their command to take



ownership of their health and wellness by demonstrating exercise programming and nutrition basics that can reinforce healthy weight.

- Tobacco use can affect many aspects of [health](#). Set a command climate that promotes a [tobacco free lifestyle](#).
- Alcohol can affect men and women differently. Due to these differences, women are more likely to experience long-term health problems such as infertility, liver disease, or damage to the heart muscle.⁴ Create a command culture that is intolerant of underage and [irresponsible drinking behavior](#). Also, provide resources to support [good decision making](#) around alcohol consumption.
- Women are more likely than men to be diagnosed with [depression](#).⁵ Provide the [Psychological and Emotional Well-Being Guide](#) to personnel to make help-seeking behavior the norm.

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

- Educate on [what conditions affect women differently](#) than men.
- Let your female command members know about the [impact of women's health on operational readiness](#).
- Share this [infographic](#) that describes ways women can address all areas of personal health.
- Help your female command members stay healthy at any age by sharing screening lists for women [ages 18-39](#) and [ages 40-64](#).
- Educate your command about the importance of [taking charge of their health](#) so they can stay healthy in between health care provider visits.
- Does your command know how to navigate health care provider visits? Share these [four tips on talking to your doctor](#).
- Provide your command with a list of [10 Tips for Women: Make Better Food Choices](#).
- Ensure [females who are pregnant or breastfeeding](#) are aware of their unique nutritional needs.
- Inform your command about [strategies for shaping healthy habits](#).
- Teach your command [promote and protect sexual health](#).



Resources

¹ Leading Causes of Death in Males and Females, United States.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/lcod/index.htm>. Updated August 2017.

² Overweight, obesity, and weight loss. Office on Women's Health. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/overweight-obesity-and-weight-loss>. Updated June 2017.

³ Physical activity. Office on Women's Health. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/physical-activity>. Updated June 2017.

⁴ Excessive Alcohol Use and Risks to Women's Health. <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/womens-health.htm>. Updated March 2016.

⁵ Depression. Office on Women's Health. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/physical-activity>. Updated June 2017.