



Health Promotion Toolbox

August: Preventive Health Month

Plan of the Week Notes

Week 1

Focus on living a healthy lifestyle now to prevent health problems in the future, especially things like chronic disease. Sailors and Marines reported a variety of behaviors in the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Workplace Health Risk Assessment (HRA) that could lead to health issues. In past years, the most common health risks were not flossing, an unhealthy diet, and not getting enough sleep. These three preventive health behaviors are easy to incorporate into your routine once you know how. To [make these healthy behaviors a habit](#), set a specific goal, make a plan, and repeat the new behavior often. Learn how to develop a daily routine that includes these preventive health practices by participating in the [1-5-7 Wellness Objective of the Day \(WOD\) Challenge](#) all month long.

Week 2

Floss once a day as part of your oral hygiene routine to reduce your risk of developing gum disease and cavities.¹ If you already brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, great! But remember, flossing once a day is equally important. Flossing gets between teeth to remove bacteria, food particles, and plaque that toothbrushes can't reach.² Plaque buildup can lead to gingivitis, the first stage of [gum disease](#) where you may develop gum inflammation, red gums, and bleeding.² Plaque buildup can also cause cavities, which can be painful and require costly and time consuming dental care.³ You can avoid these issues by taking just a few minutes to floss each day! Get started by following these [flossing tips](#).

Week 3

Eat the [recommended number of servings](#) from the five food groups (fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein) and limit high fat foods to get the nutrients your body needs to maintain health and perform at its peak. Processed and prepared foods, such as packaged, restaurant (both sit-down and fast food), and convenience foods often contain high amounts of calories, sodium, added sugars, and saturated and trans fats. When you avoid or limit eating these foods throughout the week, and [prepare some of your own meals](#) instead, you're on the



right path to a healthier diet. An easy way to eat healthier is to replace some of your prepackaged snacks like chips and candy-like granola bars with fruits and vegetables, such as real-fruit smoothies. Learn how to prepare some healthy and delicious snacks and meals that are full of fruits and vegetables with these [10 tips to increase your fruits and vegetables intake](#). Try to make half your plate [fruits and vegetables](#) at every meal!

Week 4

Get at least seven hours of sleep each night to get the rest your body needs to recover from the day. When compared to civilians, active duty service members are more likely to suffer from insomnia and short sleep duration due to stress, environment, and job requirements.⁴ Lack of sleep can decrease productivity and impair cognitive function, and also put service members at greater risk for accidents.⁵ Did you know that staying awake for just 17 to 19 straight hours impacts performance more than a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.05, and 24 straight hours impacts performance as much as a BAC of 0.10 – beyond the legal limit to operate a motor vehicle in the United States?⁶ For wounded, ill, and injured Sailors and Marines, [sleep aids in recovery](#). There are many [sleeping tips](#) you can try to start sleeping more soundly. Get better [quality sleep](#) when you avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol later in the day, and when you unplug from technology 15 to 30 minutes before bed. If you have trouble falling asleep for longer than 20 minutes, get up and do something [relaxing](#) until you are sleepy. You may also benefit from these [counterintuitive sleeping tips](#), such as spending less time in bed and scheduling time to worry before getting in bed.

References

- ¹ Flossing. American Dental Association. <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/f/flossing>.
- ² Gum Disease. American Dental Association. <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/g/gum-disease>.
- ³ Plaque. American Dental Association. <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/p/plaque>.
- ⁴ Mysliwiec V, McGraw L, Pierce R, et al. Sleep disorders and associated medical comorbidities in active duty military personnel. *Sleep*. 2013;36(2):167-174. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23372263>.
- ⁵ Banks S, Dinges DF. Behavioral and physiological consequences of sleep restriction. *J Clin Sleep Med* 2007;3:519-28. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1978335/>.
- ⁶ Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School. Judgement and Safety. <http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/need-sleep/whats-in-it-for-you/judgment-Safety>. Reviewed December 2008.