



“PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HAS BEEN SHOWN TO IMPROVE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL OUTCOMES ACROSS A WIDE SPECTRUM OF ILLNESSES AND INJURIES.”



Physical Activity and Return to Duty

Whether serving in a deployed setting or here at home, Sailors and Marines may experience wounds, illnesses, or injuries that can significantly impact their life, including their military career. Recovery from a wound, illness, or injury can be very stressful and you may feel conflicting priorities. One priority may be returning to full duty to continue your service. Although it will be up to medical professionals to determine if a return to duty will be the best option for you and your unit, by regaining and maintaining your physical fitness you'll be prepared for potential return to service. Physical activity has been shown to improve psychological and physical outcomes across a wide spectrum of illnesses and injuries. Below are some tips to help you exercise safely while recovering.

TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER. Talk to your healthcare provider before beginning physical activity, even if you have been active previously. Although you may feel ready to start exercising again certain conditions, such as anemia, may temporarily restrict physical activity.

USE YOUR RESOURCES. Take advantage of physical therapy and physical rehabilitation services that are offered. These practitioners are in the unique position to provide evidence-based techniques and individualized rehabilitation plans that are designed to restore optimal performance.

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY. Your body knows what it's talking about and is an expert on what it's capable of! A musculoskeletal injury or physical setback due to overtraining or improper training during recovery is counterproductive. If you experience pain, dizziness, excessive shortness of breath, or if something just doesn't feel right, stop exercising and contact your healthcare provider.

EASE BACK IN. It may be necessary to start slow — it can take time to build up to the accustomed type or intensity level of physical activity. The initial focus should be on regaining any functional movement that may have been diminished, developing core strength, and building muscular and cardiovascular endurance. See the reverse side of this flyer for fitness strategies that can improve functional movement and prevent musculoskeletal injuries.



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TIP	RATIONALE	WHERE TO FIND IDEAS
Build a strong foundation	Strengthening the “pillar” of the body, or the shoulders, hips, and torso, will assist in preventing both primary and secondary injuries. A strong pillar provides strength and stability when moving front to back, as well as side to side, making pillar strength a key to functional movements. This will be crucial not only for returning to duty but also for carrying out movements in your everyday life such as lifting a bag of groceries or getting in and out of a vehicle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pillar preparation movements can be found by going to the Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System (NOFFS) movement library, selecting a series, and selecting “Pillar Prep” from the dropdown menu. ▶ Core stability and flexibility exercises can be found in the USMC Fitness and Readiness Guide.
Prepare with a purpose	Following any illness or injury, the body may develop compensatory movement patterns. This occurs when a muscle or group of muscles become weak or untrained and other muscles jump in to compensate for these weaknesses. Compensatory movement patterns increase risk of injury. Movement preparation, such as a dynamic warm-up, helps correct these ineffective movement patterns while practicing good form for the upcoming exercises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Movement preparation movements can be found by going to the NOFFS movement library, selecting a series, and selecting “Movement Prep” from the dropdown menu. ▶ Active dynamic warm-ups can be found in the USMC Fitness and Readiness Guide.
Train body movements instead of body parts	Strength and cardiovascular exercises should be deliberate and progressive. It is critical to work with the healthcare team to understand what exercise type and intensity is appropriate, and also what will need to be accomplished physically to increase your ability to return to duty. Exercises should mimic movements made in everyday life, as well as those that will be performed when returning to work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The “Strength” and “Cardio Conditioning” exercises found in the NOFFS movement library were developed after careful evaluation of movements Sailors perform in their jobs. ▶ A wide variety of speed, agility, and endurance, as well as strength and power, exercises can be found in the USMC Fitness Readiness Guide.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▶ Visit the [Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System Movement Library](#) for pillar preparation, movement preparation, and strength and cardiovascular exercise ideas as well as pictures, videos, and detailed descriptions of how to perform each movement.
- ▶ For an overview of the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES), visit the [Real Warriors campaign](#) website.
- ▶ Check out the [Human Performance Resource Center Prevention and Care](#) page for information on injury prevention strategies and how to recover from an injury if it occurs.
- ▶ The National Cancer Institute provides a helpful [fact sheet](#) on physical activity and cancer.
- ▶ Visit the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center’s [Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System](#) web page for more information and resources related to NOFFS.