



# FIT FOR DUTY. FIT FOR LIFE.

## **Weight Management for Wounded, Ill, and Injured Sailors and Marines**

### **Personal excellence.**

Maintaining a healthy weight is a common challenge on the road to recovery from wounds, injuries, or illnesses. Finding a healthy weight that is right for you can take some time, and it is important to keep in mind that even small changes in your weight can affect your body's ability to heal and recover. You can achieve a healthy weight by eating a balanced diet of nutrient-dense foods and engaging in physical activity. As a resource for weight management, the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Health Promotion and Wellness Department offers educational resources and materials to help you lose or gain weight, or maintain a healthy weight.

### **Fuel for excellence.**

Being overweight, obese, or underweight may impede healing, lower quality of life, and cause additional health problems. You can aid your recovery by making healthy choices. Select nutrient-dense foods (whole grains, lean protein, fruits, vegetables, and fat-free or low-fat milk products) that contain protein for muscle recovery, vitamins and minerals for tissue repair and reduced scarring, and complex carbohydrates for needed energy.<sup>1</sup> Many nutrient dense foods are also high in fiber and/or protein which can also make you feel full longer. This can help reduce your intake and help you maintain a healthy body weight.<sup>2</sup> Also, try replacing sugary drinks with water to help keep you hydrated.

### **Get moving.**

Along with nutrition, an important aspect of weight management is physical activity. Depending on the type of illness or injury, physical activity may only be limited initially, as your body adjusts to its new state. Other situations may require long-term adaptation. Changes in physical activity level or type of activity can result in weight gain, so it is important to stay active. Be sure to consult with your health care provider or physical therapist about appropriate activities. There are lots of ways to be active and you may discover a new favorite sport or activity!

### **Maintaining a healthy weight.**

Healthy weight loss isn't just about a "diet" or "program." It's about an ongoing lifestyle that includes long-term changes in daily eating and exercise habits. These changes can be challenging, particularly during recovery. Things such as medication side effects and changes to your metabolism can also be a factor. While some factors may be out of your control, there are steps you can take towards achieving a healthy weight. Start your day with breakfast and eat small portion meals or snacks every 3-4 hours to limit overeating.

### **Gaining weight.**

Sometimes injuries and illnesses, as well as their treatments, can lead to being underweight. While this often receives less attention, being underweight can also hinder healing. Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight can assist in the recovery process. You can gain weight by selecting and eating nutrient-dense foods that are also higher in calories, staying hydrated, and adding strength training or resistance training to your workout routine with guidance from your health care provider or physical therapist.

### **Next steps.**

As you progress through recovery, also work with your health care provider, physical therapist, or dietitian to address side effects from medications, poor or little sleep, and changes in diet and physical activity. Optimal weight is important to recovery and overall health, both in the short-term and the long-term.

To learn how our resources and tools can help facilitate recovery and strengthen resilience, visit us at [WWW.MED.NAVY.MIL/SITES/NMCPHC/WOUNDED-ILL-AND-INJURED/PAGES/HEALTH-PROMOTION.ASPX](http://WWW.MED.NAVY.MIL/SITES/NMCPHC/WOUNDED-ILL-AND-INJURED/PAGES/HEALTH-PROMOTION.ASPX).

For more information on your local resources, contact:



**NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER**  
PREVENTION AND PROTECTION START HERE

<sup>1</sup> Protein in diet. U.S. National Library of Medicine. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Institutes of Health. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002467.htm>. Updated 12 January 2015. Accessed August 2015

<sup>2</sup> Weight Loss: Feel Full on Fewer Calories. The Mayo Clinic. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/weight-loss/in-depth/weight-loss/art-20044318>. Updated May 2014. Accessed August 2015.