

Health Promotion & Wellness

May/June 2021

May is Physical Fitness Month

Are You Ready for the PRT?

In early 2020, the Navy made two important updates to the Physical Readiness Test (PRT) – replacing the curl-ups with a forearm plank and adding a 2 –kilometer (km) indoor row as an option to test heart health and fitness.

The plan was to launch these updates in the second half of 2020. Due to COVID-19, its impact on the Fleet and the continued prevention efforts, the Navy decided to shift the 2021 single, six-month Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) cycle from March 1 – September 30 to July 1 – December 31. “Shifting the PFA cycle to July allows the Navy to execute the PFA after the primary [flu] season while allowing time for COVID-19 vaccines to be more widely distributed,” Chief of Naval Personnel, Vice Adm. John B Nowell, Jr., said on January 27, 2021.

When the PFA cycle begins in July, the PRT order will start with push-ups, then the forearm plank and the cardio option. This new format is based on feedback from hundreds of Sailors who tested the new methods and the order they completed them in.

The new forearm plank method reflects the Navy’s focus on training the body for movements Sailors use on a daily basis, to improve core strength and lessen the chance of causing or worsening a low back injury. Squats and lunges, for example, are more effective and reflect the activities Sailors perform while on duty. As with the curl-ups, the plank scoring is the same for both men and women. The Navy has released various graphics and videos to help Sailors learn the [proper plank form](#). It is important to note that Sailors who *initially* fail the plank test in the 2021 cycle, will not fail the PRT.

The 2km row (using a rowing machine) is a new option Sailors can choose instead of the 1.5-mile run. Rowing is a non-weight bearing, lower impact exercise that is a full body cardio workout while testing stamina. Similar to the run, the row is timed and scoring is age and gender-specific.

The goal of these changes is to help lower the risk of injury and improve overall fitness and physical performance.

NMCPHC Website is on the Move

The NMCPHC website is moving to a new platform by the end of May. In the meantime, you may experience broken links to many of the pages and documents. We apologize for the inconvenience, and be assured that we will be working to update the links as quickly as possible. A point of contact/request system will soon be in place to assist you with questions or any documents that may be lost in the process. We appreciate your patience as we work to bring this new, improved website to you!



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June is Men's Health Month

5 Power Plays for Men to Stay at the Top of Their Game

It's Men's Health month, and we're celebrating our male Sailors and Marines with tips for healthy living. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, men in the United States, on average, die five years earlier than women and die at higher rates from nine of the top 10 leading causes of death. To encourage men to take control of their health, here are **5 Power Plays for Men to Stay at the Top of Their Game**:

1. **Protect Your Heart** — Heart disease is the #1 killer of men. One way to beat the odds is to make [healthier food choices](#), like filling half of your plate with fruits and vegetables.
2. **Exercise** — Just 30 minutes of exercise a day can help you live longer and healthier. You don't have to lift weights—get moving with these [fun activity ideas](#).
3. **Preventive maintenance** — See your health care provider for wellness checkups and routine health screenings. Health symptoms don't always go away on their own and if left untreated, may lead to bigger problems. Follow these [four tips on talking to your doctor](#) to get the most out of your visit:
4. **Quit smoking** — Smoking causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, and a greater risk of erectile dysfunction. Make a plan to quit with resources from [YouCanQuit2](#).
5. **Do a self "buddy check"** — Life can get tough and talking it over with a [mental health professional](#) can help.

DOD Diabetes Care and Education Team - New Resources for You!

NMCPHC health educators and coordinators have joined the Air Force Diabetes Center of Excellence and diabetes educators from around the world to create a new DOD Diabetes Care and Education Team. The purpose of the team is to help you and your command provide resources to your patients that may otherwise be missing.

The first course, "Diabetes Self-Management Education," has been recognized by the American Diabetes Association and is designed to help diabetes patients learn how to better manage their blood sugar, understand their medications, and much more. It will be offered through the Veterans Administration's Virtual Medical Center (VA-VMC).

One of the team's goals is to add the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Diabetes Prevention Program to assist those with risk factors for diabetes (such as family history, being overweight or inactivity), with a chance to learn how to prevent or delay a diagnosis.

To attend a course, assist with teaching, or to refer a patient, please complete this [survey form](#) and let us know!



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COVID-19 Created More Choices for At-Home Personal Fitness

COVID-19 changed everything about our lives and daily routines. The world was forced to shut down and created a time in which everything we did had to be at home (and mostly still do).

All of our outside contact became virtual and our use of technology increased almost overnight. This made it possible to continue work, attend school, shop, exercise, play and even join health care visits with live video.

During the shut-down, we saw an increase in personal fitness through online activity. More exercise videos, live stream services, one-on-one video meet ups, digital fitness tools, fitness apps for at-home exercise, wearables that track health and wellness data (e.g., bracelets, rings, clothing) and activities were available so people could stay active while social distancing.

In-home fitness gear and mobile apps became even more popular and in high demand, and they still are today. Many took to “smart home” options that, while costly, offer real time workouts, a sense of community, competition and the ability to track progress over time. On the other hand, many fitness apps were developed or updated to offer a great low-cost or even free option, such as the [Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System \(NOFFS\)](#) app. They allow us to work out anywhere – inside or outside of our homes, with or without others, at any time.

You can also get creative and save money with your home workouts by using everyday items such as:

- Canned goods and milk gallon jugs filled with water or sand for hand weights
- Step stools for stepping moves
- Basketballs or volleyballs filled with sand to use as medicine balls
- Exercise bands
- Jump ropes
- Your own body weight

These are just a few of the many choices we now have to stay active and lead a healthy life during and after COVID-19. While fitness and wellness centers have re-opened in many states, some offer virtual workouts as a cheaper option for those who want to stay at home or avoid the time it takes to get to the gym.

Most would agree that COVID-19 has given everyone more time. Time to sit back and think, to be with our families, our pets, ourselves – more choices to become or stay fit!



Male Sexual Health: Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Sexual health is a state of physical, mental, and social well-being. It is a positive and respectful approach to sexuality, relationships, and pleasurable and safe sexual experiences; free of coercion, discrimination, and violence.

Anyone who has unprotected sex can get Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). STIs are infections that can be passed from one person to another through sexual contact. Such contact may come from oral, anal, and vaginal sex. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) make up bacterial, viral, and parasitic infections, such as:

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhea
- Syphilis
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
- Herpes simplex virus (HSV)
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Almost one-fifth of service members reported having more than one sex partner in the past year, and more than one-third did not use condoms with new sex partners. Rates of past-year sexually transmitted infections had increased significantly for the past years. In the Navy and Marine Corps, chlamydia infection is the most reported STI. The rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea increased among male and female service members in the 2020 surveillance timeframe.

The overall syphilis rate for active duty (AD) Navy and Marine Corps service members reached its highest point in 2019 with a rate of 78.8 per 100,000 AD. In 2020, syphilis rate for active duty (AD) Navy and Marine Corps service members was 73.3 per 100,000. The impact of syphilis and HIV on our male sailors and marines AD in 2020 is:

- 92% of AD Navy Syphilis cases were males
- 87.5% of AD USMC Syphilis cases were males
- 100% of AD Navy and USMC HIV cases were males

The HIV rate for DON for the year 2020 was 0.14 per 1000. There has been a slight decrease in HIV rates in the DON from 0.17 per 1000 in 2019 due to low testing in 2020. Most of the HIV infections were found to have increased amongst men who are blacks or are of African American descent and MSM.

STIs can result in severe problems if left untreated. They can also adversely impact AD readiness and ability to perform their duties. Continued efforts to inform all Sailors and Marines is vital to counter the increasing incidence of STIs among service members.



Sexually Transmitted Diseases (continued)

Ways to protect yourself against STIs:

Get tested – If you know or think you may have been exposed to STIs, get tested. Knowing your status will help you choose options. Most STDs have no signs or symptoms. You and your partner(s) could be unknowingly infected. The only way to know your STI status is to get yourself tested to protect your health and that of your partner. Thus men with multiple partners (either male or female) and sexually active gay and bisexual men are advised to get tested for STIs at least once a year.

Use condoms — Condoms are a good way to avoid HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) if you use them the right way every time you have sex.

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) — This is highly effective for preventing HIV. It is a daily pill that can be taken by those at risk for HIV to prevent getting infected. It is recommended for anyone at high risk, especially MSM. Using condoms in addition to PrEP is an added strategy if PrEP is not taken consistently.

Treat all types of STDs — STIs can result in serious medical issues, if not treated. It is also important to treat your current sex partners to stop reinfection and avoid further spread if you are infected.

Real Good Day: New Navy Health and Wellness Source

We're excited to announce our partnership with the Real Good Day campaign. By joining efforts with this OPNAV N17 program, we're able to expand our outreach with shared and co-branded messages about personal growth, fitness and relationships. Find the Real Good Day campaign on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) (search for @RGDcampaign), and read the Real Good Day blog on [Medium](#).

While you're at it, we encourage you to follow **NMCPHC** on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) for more health and wellness monthly topics, new updates on programs and great resources. When you share our posts to support your health promotion projects, you'll earn Blue H award points!



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Take the Dog for a Walk — It's Good for your Health

Pet owners gain many health benefits. According to the National Institute of Health, the loyalty, joy and unconditional love a pet gives us is good for our health – mentally and physically. When we started getting back outdoors during the COVID-19 pandemic, taking the dog out for a walk felt like freedom and got us exercising more than usual.

Studies have shown that pets provide **physical** benefits:

- Improve heart health
- Lower blood pressure and reduce heart rate
- Boost the “feel good” hormone (endorphins) and decrease the stress hormone (cortisol)
- Stimulate physical contact and communication
- Increase opportunities for exercise and outdoor activities

Studies have also shown the **emotional** benefits of owning a pet:

- Decrease stress, anxiety and loneliness
- Boost your mood
- Increase socialization (get you outdoors and socializing with other pet owners)
- Provide comfort and support

Our furry friends tend to sense when we're having a hard time. They will sit with us and give their unconditional love to make us feel better. Even the [Human Performance Resources by CHAMP](#) notes that pets make great accountability partners and fitness battle buddies. We aren't being biased – we know some cats, rabbits and baby pigs like going on walks too! Bottom line – pet owners get more physical exercise from taking them on walks. So take your favorite pet out for a walk and get some exercise to boost your mood.

Blue H Updates

2020: The Surgeon General's announcement is on the way to being signed! A total of 439 commands will receive the award. Please check the [submission site](#) to verify the award level that your command submitted or to see if we still need information to complete your package.

2021:

1. The HRA 2.0 program is now available and all information can be found on the Blue H website. This includes the HIQ! Reports are not yet available, but our team expects to complete the process by the end of May 2021.
2. Criteria Worksheets are currently being updated and the goal is to have them completed mid-May 2021
3. The Blue H extension deadline is reverting back to January 31 for the 2021 submission.
4. Due to Defense Health Administration's changes to command websites, the criteria to have a health promotion webpage and contain specific links to helpful websites is being waived for 2021. No other waivers or allowances for other criteria are being considered at this time.

Blue H Website: <https://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/blue-h.aspx>



Managing Back Pain for Military Wellness

Back pain is a complex condition that can have many causes. From a physical injury to the spine, ribs, or back, mental health conditions such as depression, or something as simple as sleeping ‘funny’ can cause back pain. Only a healthcare provider can give a proper diagnosis, but there is much you can do to prevent and lessen your pain.

Understand Back Pain

In most cases—up to 85 percent—back pain is what’s called “nonspecific,” which means there’s no known physical cause or physical injury. While this is a good thing, it also makes managing back pain complicated. This type of pain has a natural course. It can start with “acute” pain, which lasts 4–6 weeks and may go away without treatment. The second, or “subacute” phase can continue for 6–12 weeks without going away or reducing in severity. If pain persists for at least 12 weeks, it has become chronic pain, which is difficult to treat without holistic pain-management strategies.

Red Flag Symptoms

- Electric or fire-like pain shooting down one or both arms or legs
- Unrelenting night pain that might be OK or tolerable during the day, but gets much worse at night and keeps you from sleeping
- Unexplained or rapid weight loss
- Bowel or bladder changes
- Fever
- Cancer or a history of cancer

If you experience any of these symptoms, make an appointment to see a medical provider as soon as possible. If it’s not considered serious, your provider likely won’t order advanced X-rays unless your current bout of pain has continued for at least six weeks.

Manage Back Pain

The first step for managing back pain is to **stay active**. Avoiding activities that you [fear will make your pain worse](#), whether or not they actually will, can lead to worse or longer lasting pain. Instead, keep moving and try to live as close to a normal physical life as possible. That means keep walking and participating in [physical activity](#).

Most cases of acute back pain resolve on their own, so keep a positive mindset and take control of the things you can. Even if you can’t stop your back from hurting completely, controlling what you can—like staying active—can help reduce the severity.

Next, practice **strategic** avoidance. Limit heavy lifting and doing other things that you know will strain your back. It’s also important to modify exercise to limit back-straining lifts until your pain lessens. Exercises such as deadlifts, if not done properly, can make pain worse.

When you do work out, add in exercises that strengthen your butt and hamstrings and stretch your quads and hip flexors. Low-level exercises such as glute bridges are really good for this. Once you’ve been cleared by a medical provider, try HPRC’s [Rx3 low back pain program](#).



Microwave Series: “Fried” Rice

Fried rice is a popular takeout item. With this delicious recipe, you’ll learn how to make it on your own almost as simply as reheating the store-bought meal. It may take a bit of time to prep the ingredients, but you can truly make it your own by adding ingredients you prefer. Serves 2-3.

Ingredients:

- 3 Tablespoons untoasted sesame oil or olive oil
- 2 fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 1/2 cup thin-cut strips of ham or cooked sausage
- 3 cups cold cooked long-grain rice, such as white or brown jasmine, converted, or basmati
- 3/4 to 1 cup mixed green vegetables, such as finely shredded baby bok choy, spinach, and peas
- 1/4 cup minced scallions
- 2 Tablespoons low-sodium chicken broth or water
- 2-3 Tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce or tamari

Instructions:

1. Place the oil, mushrooms, and ham in a 2-quart casserole dish or bowl. Microwave on HIGH, covered for 2 minutes.
2. Add the rice, mixed vegetables, and scallions; stir to distribute the vegetables and break up any clumps of rice. Drizzle with the broth and soy sauce.
3. Cover and microwave on HIGH for 4-5 minutes, stirring at the 2-minute mark, until the rice is really hot and the vegetables are cooked. Serve immediately.

Mix-and-Match approach: Make this recipe how you like it or to use up leftovers. Less is more.

Use an aromatic: Onion, scallion, garlic or shallot.

Leftover cooked meat or seafood: Ham, pork, chicken, shrimp, etc.

Quick cooking vegetable: Be sure these are shredded, finely chopped, finely sliced, or julienned so they are quick cooking. Canned or frozen are good options also. Typical favorites are:

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Napa cabbage | Spinach |
| Bok choy | Mushrooms |
| Celery | Zucchini |
| Green peas | Water Chestnuts |
| Carrots | (any vegetables will do!) |

Seasoning options: Soy sauce, ginger, garlic, fish sauce, vegetarian mushroom oyster sauce, toasted sesame oil, hoisin sauce, etc.