



Choose to Live a Healthy Lifestyle

Living a healthy lifestyle is a choice – a choice to develop and maintain healthy eating habits and engage in regular exercise. It's not a decision that you make once in life and then forget. Rather, it's an ongoing commitment that can help prevent disease and improve overall well-being. You can live a healthy lifestyle by making the following choices every day.

Healthy Eating

Food is fuel for the body. To be at your best, you need to eat nutrient-dense foods, such as whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products. These power-packed foods contain the most vitamins and minerals, which provide you with quality energy for the least amount of calories. They also help reduce your risk of developing heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and several types of cancer while also helping you maintain a healthy body weight.¹

Processed and prepared foods, such as pre-packaged, take-out, and convenience foods often contain high amounts of calories, sodium (salt), added sugars, and fat. Avoid or limit eating them throughout the week. Understanding the appropriate portion sizes can also help you limit excessive calorie intake, particularly when eating high-calorie foods, such as ice cream or potato chips. Check out the Health Promotion and Wellness (HPW) fact sheet [Size Up Your Servings](#) to see how much you are actually eating. You can also eat healthier by ²:

- Making half your plate fruits and vegetables
- Making at least half of your grains whole grains
- Switching to fat-free or low-fat milk
- Choosing foods with less sodium
- Drinking water instead of sugary drinks
- Checking out [HPW Healthy Eating](#) for more tips and resources

In addition to what you eat, you need to be aware of when and why you eat. Do you eat when you're bored or stressed? Do you eat because you're happy or sad? Mindful eating is about paying attention to your hunger cues and your level of fullness. If you regularly make poor food choices or overeat, check out the HPW fact sheets on [Eating with Food in Mind](#) and the [Tracker to Identify Your Food Triggers](#) to help you improve your eating habits.

Living a healthy lifestyle takes time. Unfortunately, there are many alleged quick fixes that are actually marketing strategies for fad diets. These diets often eliminate or severely restrict



certain food groups, include dietary supplements, and do not promote or support enduring lifestyle changes. To find out more about dietary supplements, check out the HPW fact sheets on [How Healthy are Dietary Supplements](#) and [How Safe are Dietary Supplements](#).

Active Living

Physical activity is another important factor in healthy living. Engaging in a variety of moderate to intense aerobic exercise, muscle strengthening, and functional body movement activities will help you reach your physical, psychological, and operational prime. By being active you can³:

- Control your weight
- Maximize your energy level
- Minimize your stress level
- Enhance your mood
- Improve your sleep
- Strengthen your bones and muscles to prevent injury
- Accelerate your healing following illness or injury
- Reduce your risk of chronic disease
- Increase your ability to perform daily tasks, on and off the job

If you don't work out regularly; it's not too late to start! Try brisk walking, swimming, or bicycling to get started. Engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise each week to reduce the risk of chronic disease and prevent weight gain.³ If your goal is to lose weight and keep it off, aim for at least 300 minutes of moderate-intensity or 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise each week.³ For examples on how adults can reach their recommended aerobic physical activity, see [Get Moving! Fun Activity Ideas for Adults](#) and also check out [HPW Active Living](#) for more tips.

The Navy also offers the Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System (NOFFS) that personalizes your training routine with exercises that mimic your job-related movements. The program is geared toward all fitness levels and was developed in partnership with physical fitness experts who train the world's top professional athletes and sports franchises. To learn more, check out [NOFFS](#).

As service members, beneficiaries, retirees, and DoD civilians, you understand the meaning of commitment. Your ability to fulfill your duties and support your family depends largely on your well-being. That's why it is important to make a similar commitment to living a balanced lifestyle. Choose to eat a nutrient-dense diet and exercise regularly so that you are fit and healthy at all times.



References

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- ² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020. 8th Edition. <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>. Published January 2016. Accessed January 2016.
- ³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf>. Published October 2008. Accessed December 2015.