



HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE



FUEL FOR THE FIGHT

CHALLENGE yourself and your Service members to use at least one recommended resource to improve nutritional readiness.



As we continue to serve our communities and nation, it is paramount that we focus on our greatest asset: our people. A critical component of our strength and resilience is our health, and a cornerstone of good health is proper nutrition.

The way we fuel our bodies directly affects how we think, train, recover, and perform. When we eat well, we show up stronger for our families, our units, and the mission. Conversely, poor nutrition impacts our energy, focus, and long-term health.

As Guardsmen, we pride ourselves on discipline and preparedness. Those same principles apply to our eating habits and financial fitness. Small, consistent actions can lead to better performance, recovery, and overall readiness. Use the resources in this month's Challenge to help you stay fueled for the fight.

Stronger Together, Stronger Tomorrow.

Steven S. Nordhaus John T. Raines III

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FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

- Chronic diseases account for 70% of all U.S. deaths every year. Poor diets contribute to chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity.¹
- Only 2 in 5 young adults meet both weight and physical activity standards required for military service.²
- Proper nutrition provides the nutrients to optimize physical and cognitive performance—essential components of mission readiness.³
- More than 44 million people in the United States experience food insecurity every year.⁴



ATTENTION

GUARD YOUR HEALTH

Proper nutrition is mission-critical fuel for peak performance. Recognize the signs that your diet might need improvement:



Physical endurance: you can't keep up with others during physical training (PT)



Mental sharpness: you have trouble paying attention during drill and a slower reaction time



Sustained energy: you run out of physical and mental energy before the end of training



Recovery: it takes you longer to recover from a day of hard PT or an injury

Nutrition plays a pivotal role in ensuring Soldiers and Airmen are prepared for the demands of their duties.³

TEAMWORK AT THE TABLE

Build nutritional readiness by making healthy eating on a budget a shared family mission.

- Save money by involving spouses and kids in meal planning and packing healthy, affordable lunches.
- Instead of relying on take-out, spend time cooking together as a family to cut costs while strengthening your relationships.
- Lead by example. Choose budget-friendly, nutrient-dense foods and limit processed options to support healthier eating habits.
- Use batch cooking and leftovers to save both time and money during busy drill weekends.

When the whole family works together to plan, shop, and cook, eating healthy on a budget becomes easier and more rewarding. Involving everyone not only stretches your budget, but it also builds habits that support the physical and mental endurance required for mission readiness.

CONTACT US

For more information on nutritional readiness or other wellness topics, email: ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil

EATING HEALTHY ON A BUDGET

What does it mean?

- Nutritional readiness means Service members and their families have consistent access to quality, affordable food that supports optimal performance.

Why does it matter?

- Through proactive planning, Service members can attain and sustain nutritional readiness on a budget.

What can you do?

- **Plan your meals** to avoid relying on last-minute take-out that drains your wallet and energy. Get started with a sample grocery list: <https://www.hprc-online.org/nutrition/mne/optimize/community/sample-grocery-list-and-worksheet>
- **Fuel your training** by building meals around budget staples that support mental and physical performance, such as dairy, eggs, and frozen vegetables. Canned foods such as beans, tomatoes, and tuna are excellent, budget-friendly protein and vegetable sources.
- **Look for bargains** and buy staples in bulk such as rice, pasta, oats, and dried beans to save on groceries. Choose frozen fruit and vegetables for equal nutrition at lower cost. Purchase meat, poultry, and fish on sale and freeze what you won't use right away. For more smart grocery shopping tips: <https://www.hprc-online.org/nutrition/mne/optimize/community/smart-grocery-shopping-budget>
- **Shop at the commissary** for additional grocery discounts and your local farmers market for fresh, affordable produce. Check out the Defense Commissary app **CLICK2GO®**: <https://corp.commissaries.com/shopping/click-2-go> and find local farmers markets by searching <https://www.usdalocalfoodportal.com/>
- **Reduce the stigma and start the conversation** if you or a fellow Service member are facing issues with nutritional readiness or food access. For help to get started: <https://www.hprc-online.org/total-force-fitness/gotmysix/strengthen-food-security-support-your-teammates>

SHOP SMART, SHOP SIMPLE

MyPlate can help you make healthy choices within your budget.

Find savings in your area and discover new ways to prepare budget-friendly meals at <https://www.myplate.gov/app/shopsimple>.



RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



Military OneSource's podcast, *How to Fuel Your Mental and Physical Health*, provides tips for eating well despite busy schedules and tight budgets. <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/podcasts/military-onesource/fuel-mental-and-physical-health/>

Military OneSource health and wellness coaches provide free virtual, personal support related to healthy eating, fitness, and stress management. <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/health-wellness-coaching/>

In the **Brigade Blog**, *How to Find Healthy, Affordable Food as a Military Family*, get helpful tips on feeding your military family on a budget. <https://blog-brigade.militaryonesource.mil/2025/03/14/blogs-health-wellness-affordable-healthy-food-for-military-families/>



Read the **U.S. Department of Agriculture's Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030**. The new revised food pyramid emphasizes eating real food and prioritizes protein quality, healthy fats, and limiting highly processed foods. <https://cdn.realfood.gov/DGA.pdf>



Assess your current nutrition practices and set valuable and attainable goals to reach desired outcomes with the **Human Performance Resources by CHAMP's (HPRC) Military Nutrition Self-Assessment Workbook**. <https://www.hprc-online.org/nutrition/performance-nutrition/military-nutrition-self-assessment>

Download **HPRC's 3 in 1 Training Days Handout** to learn how to build a balanced and nutrient-rich plate to fuel your performance. <https://www.hprc-online.org/nutrition/go-green/about-g4g/nutrition/3-1-training-days-handout>



SPOTLIGHT: NORTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD - FUELING PERFORMANCE VIDEO SERIES

- North Dakota National Guard's eight-part video series provides tips and recommendations for healthy eating to stay mission-ready.
- The topics provide guidance on balancing your diet with essential foods necessary to maintain performance, best practices for eating on the go, weight management, and choosing foods that provide the most nutritional value.
- View the video series at <https://www.ndguard.nd.gov/commanders-toolbox/fueling-performance-series>.

REFERENCES:

1. Centers for Disease Control. <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/php/healthy-food-environments/index.html>
2. Centers for Disease Control. <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity/php/military-readiness/unfit-to-serve.html>
3. Defense Health Agency. <https://dha.mil/News/2026/01/06/19/14/Nutrition-role-in-mission-readiness>
4. Human Performance Resources by CHAMP. <https://www.hprc-online.org/total-force-fitness/gotmysix/strengthen-food-security-support-your-teammates>