



# HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE



## FUELING THE MISSION

### GOOD HEALTH BEGINS IN THE GUT

The digestive tract is lined with trillions of microorganisms, including healthy and unhealthy bacteria. An overgrowth of unhealthy bacteria could cause inflammation, which studies have associated with mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. Positive mental health increases quality of life and helps mitigate the risk of harm.

### TIPS FOR IMPROVING



The gut is where food is broken down into small nutrients. These nutrients are absorbed by the body to use for energy, growth, and repair, which are hallmarks of a ready and resilient Service member.

To improve overall health and military performance, check out the foods and habits that can **increase** or **decrease** gut health:

- ↑ Fermented foods, such as yogurt
- ↑ Dietary fiber, such as whole grains
- ↑ Hydration
- ↑ Exercise
- ↑ Sleep
- ↓ Added sugars
- ↓ Excessive sodium
- ↓ Frequent consumption of fast food
- ↓ Regular use of antibiotics

**CHALLENGE** your Service members to adopt at least one of the recommended resources to enhance nutritional fitness

### FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

- The **average American diet scores a failing grade** (59 out of 100) for overall quality according to the Healthy Eating Index<sup>2</sup>
- **60%** of adults have one or more diet-related **chronic diseases**<sup>2</sup>

### PROPER NUTRITION PROTECTS THE BODY & MIND



#### Physical Health

Heart Disease	Obesity
Stroke	Cancer
Diabetes	Osteoporosis

#### Mental Health

Depression	Mood Changes
Anxiety	Insomnia
Memory Issues	Fatigue

### CONTACT US

For more information on nutritional fitness or other wellness topics, email us at: [ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil](mailto:ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil)



## NURTURE YOUR GUT THROUGH NUTRITIONAL FITNESS

### What does it mean?

- Nutritional fitness is choosing foods known to fuel performance, mission readiness, and optimal health.
- A healthy gut is an indicator of nutritional fitness.

### Why does it matter?

- Healthy food choices can help prevent diet-related chronic diseases and enhance mission readiness.
- Food choices that promote a healthy gut may protect mental health and reduce the risk of harm.

### What can you do?

- *Lead by example.* Model healthy eating and lifestyle choices.
- Encourage Service members to fuel with food first. If nutritional needs cannot be met, recommend they speak to a healthcare professional and review the Operation Supplement Safety website before exploring supplements.
- Discourage the use of fad diets to lose weight, enhance performance, or improve health. Recommend Service members work with a Health and Wellness Coach to set realistic and personalized goals.
- Talk about the connection between food and mental health. Create a protective environment that encourages help-seeking behaviors.
- When possible, allow Service members adequate time for meals to refuel, rehydrate, and rest.

## GET YOUR GUT IN GEAR

Probiotics and prebiotics work together to maintain a natural balance of bacteria in the gut.

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria found in foods, such as yogurt, buttermilk, aged cheese, pickles, sauerkraut, sour cream, kefir, tempeh, kombucha, miso, and kimchi.

*Prebiotics* are non-digestible fibers found in plant based foods, such as oatmeal, barley, leafy green vegetables, garlic, onions, mushrooms, sweet potatoes, apples, berries, and bananas.

*Probiotics* feed on prebiotics to grow beneficial bacteria, which supports a healthy gut. A healthy gut protects the body and mind, which enhances mission readiness.

**TIP!** Combine probiotic and prebiotic foods in the same meal or snack.

- Plain yogurt and berries



## RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



Military OneSource Health and Wellness Coaching offers free nutrition consultation for Service members and their families via phone, online chat, or video [www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/health-wellness-coaching](http://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/health-wellness-coaching)



The Warfighter Nutrition Guide contains strategies and recommendations for all aspects of performance nutrition [www.hprc-online.org/nutrition/warfighter-nutrition-guide](http://www.hprc-online.org/nutrition/warfighter-nutrition-guide)



Operation Supplement Safety provides a list of DoD prohibited ingredients, a scorecard to rate supplements, and an ask the expert feature [www.opss.org](http://www.opss.org)



Start Simple with MyPlate App allows users to set goals, view progress, and change eating behaviors [www.myplate.gov/resources/tools/startsimple-myplate-app](http://www.myplate.gov/resources/tools/startsimple-myplate-app)



## SPOTLIGHT: 146 AIRLIFT WING NUTRITION & WELLNESS PROGRAM

- Group training, one-on-one counseling, meal planning, and other resources offered at no cost
- Available to Wing members and families to enhance connectedness and retention, in addition to overall health
- Support is accessible virtually and in-person; and classes are held during the week and on drill weekends
- For more information, email: [ng.ncr.ngb-arng.mbx.ngb-j1-partnerships@army.mil](mailto:ng.ncr.ngb-arng.mbx.ngb-j1-partnerships@army.mil)

## REFERENCES:

1. Dietary Guidelines for Americans [www.dietaryguidelines.gov](http://www.dietaryguidelines.gov)
2. Healthy Eating Index [www.fns.usda.gov/healthy-eating-index-hei](http://www.fns.usda.gov/healthy-eating-index-hei)
3. Loiewski, et al., 2021 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pnpbp.2020.110111>
4. Kho and Lal, 2018 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmicb.2018.01835>