

1 The Warrior Athlete



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Nutrition for the Warfighter

The demands imposed by military service, training, and missions are unlike any athletic endeavor. Success requires the mustering of all strength and endurance—both physical and mental. Military service members, Warfighters (WF), are indeed “Warrior Athletes,” the ultimate athlete, at the top of the athletic pyramid. One factor that will contribute to mission success and life-long health is good nutrition. It is well known that appropriate nutritional habits and interventions can enhance performance, and these successful approaches need to be known.



Warfighter	Professional/Olympic Athlete
Year-round training cycle.	Seasonal training.
Multiple skills.	One sport.
Volunteer.	Sponsored.
24/7 potential for deployment.	Well scheduled and orchestrated events.
Self-trained/Help yourself.	Full spectrum support.
Eat on the fly/Help yourself.	Sports nutritionist/Psychologists.
Military issue tents.	Pampered with 5-star hotels.
Covert ops.	Limelight and enthusiastic audience.
Life/Death.	Win/Lose.
Global impact.	Self-promotion/Local enthusiasm.
Unexpected is the norm.	Structured and controlled.
Private reflection and satisfaction.	Money, endorsements, Olympic gold, public approval, and appreciation.
Unit at risk.	Team effort.
Buddy-reliant.	Coach-directed goals.



All service members are Warfighters, regardless of duties. This manual is intended to be a resource for all Warfighters and includes a variety of materials ranging from short summaries to detailed information, with worksheets, links, and important tips for nutrition at home and when deployed.

Looking Forward

This Nutrition Guide evolved into the final product after multiple conversations, discussions, and interactions with military, fitness, and nutrition experts. The Guide is dense, but each chapter starts with key information, and an executive summary provides a “shortened” version.

- Chapters 2 through 4 provide general background information about energy expenditure, source of energy, essential nutrients and nutrition concepts. These are the backbone of the guide.
- Chapters 5 through 8 will help you select a healthy diet: they contain menus for eating at home, menus for eating in ethnic and fast food restaurants, choosing healthy snacks, selecting appropriate military rations, and combining commercial-off-the-shelf products with military rations.
- Chapters 9 through 13 review important information on being a warrior athlete. Detailed information and websites that discuss dietary supplements, combat rations and products to be avoided are also provided.
- Chapters 14 and 15 explore nutritional strategies for various missions, how to optimize nutritional intake to combat challenging environmental and physiological conditions, and how to eat on the local economy when deployed.
- Chapter 16 discusses nutritional strategies to regain pre-deployment health and fitness after returning home from extended deployments.
- Chapters 17 and 18 provide information on how to be a warrior athlete for 20+ years and what the “high-mileage” warrior athlete should consider in order to maintain operational readiness and good health after years of physical abuse.

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are Warfighters.
All Warfighters are
“warrior athletes.”

Future Success

Warfighters are a select group of warrior athletes who can benefit from nutritional guidance. Each command has specialized missions, with the duration of deployments ranging from 30 days to 12 months. Long missions in locations far from the central support hub pose very difficult nutritional challenges to Warfighters, and unfortunately, good solutions are not always possible. Despite differences across military commands, this guide has been designed to cover the spectrum of needs, so performance under the most rigorous conditions is optimized. The success of Warfighters require effective nutritional strategies to optimize performance during operations and preserve health during the golden years of retirement.