Department of Defense Nutrition Standards

July 21, 2021

Introduction

Some Members of Congress have repeatedly expressed interest in maintaining a ready and capable military. Meeting readiness and capability requirements includes preserving the health and fitness of American servicemembers. Various factors, including physical fitness, body composition, access to nutritious foods and the nutritional content of foods consumed, may affect the health of servicemembers and their ability to conduct military operations. Nutrition—defined, in part, as the process of taking in and using food for growth, liberation of energy, and replacement of tissues—may play an important role in the health and fitness of the force. According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion within the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), poor nutrition contributes to "many costly diseases, including obesity, heart disease and some cancers." According to the Department of Defense (DOD), obesity is a worsening issue for servicemembers. In the 2019 Health of the Force Report "the overall prevalence of obesity has steadily increased since 2015" and had reached 17.9% among active component servicemembers.

DOD has undertaken various efforts to promote the health of servicemembers and military readiness. For example, the 2011 Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3405.1 is a DOD-wide policy that describes the "Chairman's Total Force Fitness Framework" which DOD considers a key component of military readiness. The Framework includes seven components of fitness, including nutritional fitness, which DOD defines as the ability to sustain performance through foods, dietary supplements and beverages in adequate quantities, quality, and proportions in order to optimize health and performance.

Selected DOD Nutrition and Food Service Regulations and Initiatives

Each military service maintains its own regulations for military dining facilities and food programs. The following are selected examples of key DOD and joint service regulations and initiatives.

- DOD Manual (DODM) 1338.10, *DOD Food Service Program (DFSP)*, updated in 2020, establishes responsibilities and standards for all DOD food service programs.

- DOD Instruction 6130.05, *DOD Nutrition Committee*, updated in 2020, establishes policy, responsibilities and procedures for the committee.

- Army Regulation 40-25/Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 10110.1/Marine Corps Order 10110.49/Air Force Instruction 44-141 *Nutrition and Menu Standards for Human Performance Optimization,* revised in 2017, establishes jointly agreed upon nutrition and menu standards for all military services.

- The DOD-wide Go for Green Initiative is one example of a DOD program aimed at making it easy for servicemembers to find high-performance foods and drinks to boost fitness, strength, and health. It educates servicemembers and improves on their *food environment* through menu coding, standardized food cards, food placement strategies, and promotion of green-coded items. The program uses a green, yellow, and red coding system (**Figure 1**) to inform servicemembers of the nutritional value of what they are consuming.
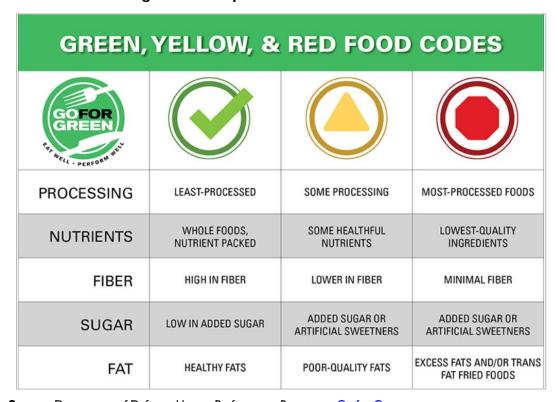
Figure 1. Example Go For Green Placard

Source: Department of Defense. Human Performance Resources: Go for Green.

Who creates guidelines for servicemember nutrition?

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD(HA)) provides guidance for sanitation, nutrition education, and nutritional standards and serves as the approving authority for DOD-wide nutrition standards developed by the Secretary of the Army. The ASD(HA) also chairs the DOD Nutrition Committee, which authorizes exceptions to food service sanitation and nutrition requirements. See **Figure 2**.

DOD Directive 3235.02E assigns the Secretary of the Army as the Executive Agent to establish DOD nutrition requirements (also called *military dietary reference intakes* (MDRIs)) for application to all DOD

food service programs and operations. Researchers establish MDRIs based upon scientific evaluation and recommendations by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, as well as the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) developed by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS).
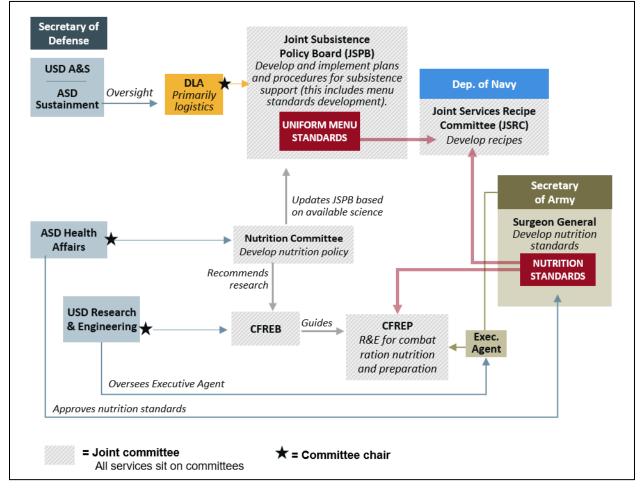
Figure 2. DOD Nutrition Development, Oversight and Guidance

Source: CRS graphic derived from DOD Manual 1338.10, *DOD Food Service Program*, updated April 20, 2020. **Notes:** The Combat Feeding Research and Engineering Board (CFREB) guides the Combat Feeding Research and Engineering Program (CFREP), which the Secretary of the Army is responsible for executing.

Who provides oversight and sustainment logistics?

Service chiefs and secretaries are responsible for overseeing the implementation of guidance and nutrition standards established by DODM 1338.10 and the Nutrition Committee.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)) establishes DOD policy on all matters related to subsistence logistics and delegates certain authorities to ASD for Sustainment (ASD(S)). ASD(S) oversees the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and provides guidance to the DFSP via the Joint Subsistence Policy Board (JSPB). DLA is responsible for global food logistics and drives acquisition based on "best value, best quality, and nutritional adequacy at a reasonable price."

Questions for Congress

Congress may consider the following lines of inquiry to obtain further information on servicemember nutrition.

Nutrition in the Military

- The USDA and HHS dietary guidelines (i.e., DGA) were designed to promote health and prevent disease, but the guidelines are not tailored to servicemembers, who may have different nutritional requirements based on activity level, job type, and individual health status. What is DOD's strategy to evaluate potentially different nutritional needs?

- What steps is DOD taking to change behaviors or advocate for healthier lifestyles among servicemembers?

- How does DOD measure success of the *Chairman's Total Force Fitness Program* and other nutritional programs?

DOD Feeding and Dining Facilities

- How many military service dining facilities are currently meeting nutritional and menu standards set by DODM 1338.10? How does DOD ensure its dining facilities meet standards?

- Are DOD's dining facilities structured to aid in healthy eating choices?

- How does DOD provide access to healthy foods to shift workers and when facilities are closed? Does DOD use technology, such as refrigerated units, stocked with healthy foods?

Menu Design

- For whom are on-base dining menus designed? Are combat and non-combat professions, or different sedentary or physical activity levels taken into account?

- How are DOD recipes designed? Do cooking techniques account for both healthiness and tastiness?

- How does DOD coordinate with USDA and HHS on nutrition guidelines for servicemembers?

Author Information

Erin Tompkins
Defense Health Fellow

Christian Bergtholdt
U.S. Air Force Fellow

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