



The Performance Triad, the right health focus for all

By USAMEDDAC-Fort Carson Public Affairs

Army Medicine formally kicked off its Army-wide Performance Triad campaign the first week in June, to positively influence the health and behaviors of the entire Army Family. The triad includes sleep, activity, and nutrition, elements that significantly contribute to health, performance and resilience.

“These are important because they are the BIG 3 when it comes to a healthy lifestyle,” said Capt. Kelly Kaim, Evans Army Community Hospital’s chief outpatient dietitian. “Even having one of these out of sync can impact how we feel and how good we can do our job.”

The Army’s Surgeon General is focused on transforming Army Medicine from a healthcare system to a System for Health that focuses on promoting healthy behaviors and addresses health issues before they become health problems. To support this initiative the Medical Command developed this campaign using the theme “Performance Triad: Your prescription for a longer, healthier life”

“The Performance Triad is the Army’s answer to the obesity crisis that is overwhelming our nation and military,” said Tony Heinz, project lead at Fort Carson’s Army Wellness Center. “The Fort Carson community is responding to the initiative by overwhelming the Army Wellness Center, Nutrition Care Division and MWR fitness centers to learn more about improving their health and wellness.”

The Army Wellness Center measures people’s true physical condition using state of the art equipment and the latest evidence-based information. It employs a “BOD POD” to accurately measure a client’s body fat versus lean tissue and, among other activities,

offers metabolic testing, fitness (VO2 SubMax) testing and education and evaluation on healthy sleep habits.

The center's clients are often eager to tell their stories about their journeys to a healthier lifestyle.

"According the Army tape test, I was within compliance but considered my overall health to be mediocre at best," said Maj. Clint Magana, chief of inpatient services at Evans hospital. "As a healthcare professional, I felt that I had the knowledge to do it myself but I lacked the determination. Swallowing my pride, I went to the Wellness Center and took the classes they offered."

Magana had an appropriate 7-8 hour sleep routine. Sleeping less or not having quality sleep could have caused him serious short and long term consequences – from impairing daily readiness through reduced alertness and concentration to increasing risk for obesity, cardiovascular disease and depression. Fatigue and drowsiness from poor sleep could also have caused accidents and could be fatal.

The Center's staff assessed his overall physical condition and encouraged him to increase his activity to about 10,000 steps per day and said he should work out more often, but it was his diet that primarily affected his health. He said it was the "little things" that were affecting him. He had forgotten about eating more fruits and vegetables, cutting out the sodas, eating less processed food, and about choosing his foods more carefully and eating smaller portions, more often.

"Losing the weight was not as easy as when I was 21 and continuously active. The Wellness Center helped me develop a plan, execute it, and held me accountable by having me come in every month to check my progress," he said. "Now, I'm still tired at the end of the day but I feel better overall."

A Blackhawk Pilot, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jomond Ervin looked into the mirror and didn't like what he saw.

"I was ashamed," he said realizing that he needed to get his eating habits in check. Ervin's unit medic referred him to the Wellness Center; the staff there suggested he change the way he eats by controlling his intake of calories and prescribed weight lifting.

"The combination...is what I needed to move in the right direction to losing weight and feeling better about myself, in and out of uniform," he said. "My overall health now has skyrocketed! I feel better about myself and all I needed was to meet the right people, remain motivated for the cause and change my lifestyle to a healthier one."

Rory Travis is an Army retiree and the manager of the Comprehensive Soldier & Family Fitness Training Center. He considered himself generally healthy but his arthritis caused pain when working out and not working out caused him to gain weight.

"I lost sight of the meaning and purpose to be at my best physically and was losing my mental edge and drive," he said. "I got winded carrying laundry up and down stairs...I realized my quality of life and chances of longevity were slipping away from me."

When Travis heard about the I-Heart Challenge, he found himself at the Wellness Center and made use of the resources there.

"The Fort Carson AWC I-Heart Challenge introduced me to assessment tools, a knowledgeable and helpful AWC staff, and available resources to evaluate and improve my physical performance and overall health," he said. "I now run and bike four or five times a week and I started going back to the gym for strength and conditioning. There is no question that I've experienced a marked increase in my overall health and attitude; I've gone from good to great health...I feel stronger, leaner and more mentally agile."

“Everyone should take advantage of the Army Wellness Center,” said Heinz. “We are always expanding equipment and staff to keep up with the community demands for the service. Improving your sleep, activity, and nutrition will improve the quality and longevity of your life.”

In concert with the Wellness Center’s efforts, Evans hospital’s Nutrition Care Division supports the Performance Triad by routinely conducting nutrition education classes to leaders, Soldiers and Family members. It also inspects Fort Carson’s dining facilities for nutrition standards. And, its staff members practice what they preach.

“All our military dietitians have taken part in a 30-day health challenge to eat healthy, get at least seven hours of sleep and we exercise regularly,” said Kaim, who also serves as the sports dietitian for the Army’s World Class Athlete Program.

According to the Army’s Medical Command, obesity rates among adult Army Family members is 32.5 percent which is slightly lower than the national rate but they are subject to the same environmental factors that have contributed to the obesity epidemic nationwide: an abundance of cheap, low-nutrient, high-calorie food, but with limited access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are often more costly than calorie-dense foods of lower nutritional quality. Higher prices of fruits and vegetables are associated with lower intake and increases in body mass index (BMI).

Good nutrition is a part of a healthy “lifestyle”, not a “diet”. People should increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, skim and low fat dairy and lean protein. They should “fuel” properly through a balance of carbohydrates, proteins, and healthy fats to maintain lean muscle mass and they should view food as part of their physical conditioning -- planning meals like planning workouts. Eating right improves physical and cognitive performance, appearance, and improves endurance and stamina.

“I suggest people learn more about the importance of the ‘triad’ for their health and start getting plenty of rest, becoming more active, and eating healthier,” said Kaim. “The Performance Triad is an idea that is important for people of all ages to pay attention to and following the healthy guidelines we discuss and provide will help to enhance your life.”

[To find out more about the Performance Triad: Sleep, Activity, and Nutrition visit:
<http://armymedicine.mil/Pages/performance-triad.aspx#>]



Christopher Baker, a health educator at the Fort Carson Army Wellness Center, has members of the Evans Army Community Hospital staff bear crawl during the hospital's participation in the Army Medicine Performance Triad Kickoff week. The bear crawl was just one of the exercises they did during a SPARQ (speed, power, agility, reaction, quickness) sports conditioning session. Muscle strengthening activities should be done at least two days a week working all major muscle groups to stay fit, and all should engage in 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise. This helps with chronic pain, depression, anxiety and stress. Enjoyable activities like jogging, playing a sport or dancing make exercise fun. (U.S. Army photo by Jeff Troth)



Evans Army Community Hospital staff members run laps during a SPARQ (speed, power, agility, reaction, quickness) sports conditioning session. (U.S. Army photo by Jeff Troth)