



Fort Carson set to take challenge

By Jeff Troth, U.S. Army Medical

The Fort Carson Army Wellness Center is challenging everyone on post – Soldier, family member and civilian – to become healthier members of the community. And they have a tool to help you accomplish this.

“The 26-Week Health Challenge is a way to enhance your sleep, activity and nutrition by using tips from Army Medicine’s Performance Triad,” said Maj. Danielle Nichols, the chief of the Fort Carson Army Wellness Center.

The 26-Week Health Challenge is a self-paced, self-guided program that offers practical tips or goals to kick start healthy habits that can last a lifetime. The purpose of the challenge is to increase a person’s performance by concentrating on three areas of their life – sleep, activity and nutrition. Each week there are different goals and tips for a person to try and reach.

For instance, during week 2 to help improve sleep the challenge lists common barriers to achieving healthy sleep: changes in bedtime and wake time; stress; and caffeine or nicotine too close to bedtime. In week 23, the tip is not to exercise within three hours of going to sleep.

“Sleep is a very important component to our daily activity,” says Nichols. “Sleep allows us to recoup and allows the body to heal itself and prepare for future missions. If we don’t get enough sleep we won’t perform at our optimum level.”

During week 3 participants of the challenge are reminded not to overdo it on an activity when starting off. Instead of going out and running 5 miles, start with a 5-minute walk. The goal for week 15 is to walk 10,000 steps during your daily routine.

“People should ease into an activity routine and seek assistance from their medical providers,” Nichols said. “At the wellness center we can provide guidance and services regarding body composition, metabolism, fitness counseling, healthy sleeping and stress management.”

Nutrition is just as important as the other two areas. Week 9’s nutrition goal is to watch what you drink, avoid beverages that contain added sugars and strive for 8-10 cups of water per day. The healthy nutrition goal for week 19 is when the craving for sweets hits, prepare a dish with fruit as a main ingredient.

“Food is your fuel source and we want to maintain a balance of what our bodies are expending in activity,” the major said. “Our bodies need fuel to perform. So if we are not

providing the right amount or type of nutrients we can see an impact on our activities and lifestyle.“

To help participants keep track of their progress during the 26-Week Health Challenge, Army Medicine created a document that not only lists the weekly goals, but also has tracking charts. The charts allow participants to record personal assessments at the beginning of the challenge as well as at the six-week, midpoint, 18-week and the 26-week end points.

“We ordered a number of the booklets, but I think our supply will be quickly depleted ... so we have a downloadable version on our website (<http://evans.amedd.army.mil/wellness/>),” Nichols said.

The 26-Week Health Challenge is part of Army Medicine’s move from a healthcare system, which focuses on treatment of illnesses and injuries, to a system for health which focuses on wellness and prevention. A key component of this system for health is the Performance Triad, the Army surgeon general’s initiative to improve stamina, readiness, and health through quality sleep, enhanced activity, and improved nutrition.

While deployed to Afghanistan in 2011, Lt. Gen. Patricia D. Horoho, the Army surgeon general noticed that Soldiers suffered from sleep deprivation, a lack of healthy activity and many high-fat and high-calorie food choices were offered at the dining facilities. Upon returning to the states she realized that many of the health issues deployments raised weren’t exclusive to deployments or to the Army.

"People are grappling with these questions around the globe, and (the idea of the Triad) resonates with everybody I've talked to," Horoho said. "It is in these areas (sleep, activity and nutrition) that I think we can have the biggest impact to really make sure that we are ready and resilient and able to respond to whatever the future challenges are for our Army."

“The 26-Week Health Challenge isn’t intended to be a drastic shift that can only be maintained for a limited time,” Nichols added. “It gives individuals information to change some of their habits and increase their overall wellness.”

For more information about the 26-Week Health Challenge and The Amy Wellness Center see <http://evans.amedd.army.mil/wellness/> The Amy Wellness Center is located in Building 1843, on Prussman Boulevard, across from Kentucky Fried Chicken. Call 526-3887 to make an appointment with one of their counselors.

Performance Triad

26 Week

Health Challenge

Start the Challenge Today!

Enhance your health with **Sleep**, **Activity**, and **Nutrition**.

