

# SUPPORTING Officer Safety THROUGH Family Wellness

# Nutritional Needs



It seems like what is considered healthy changes every day. Understanding what is healthy and how to teach your family about good eating habits can be challenging given the constant cycle of fad diets and changing food pyramids. With some simple preparation, you and your family can be on track for a healthier lifestyle. Recognizing the important link between nutrition and officer and family health and wellness can lead to better job performance, healthier individuals and families, and safer communities.



## Be Aware of the Link Between Stress & Food

Be mindful of the connection between stress—work and life—and the food you consume. Choose healthy food options in times of stress to lead to clearer thinking, increased energy, and better overall health.

It is common to choose “comfort foods” with increased fat and/or sugar content in times of stress, regardless of hunger — particularly officers under physical or emotional distress.<sup>i</sup>

- The FDA recommends limiting added sugar to **less than nine teaspoons daily**, as added sugars provide no nutritional value<sup>ii</sup>. This is roughly equivalent to:



6.5 slices of frozen pepperoni pizza



3 glazed doughnuts



1.5 cups of apple juice



3.3 cinnamon raisin bagels

Practice good coping skills to manage your stress levels.



**Model good relationships with food** to your family and encourage young children to do the same.

**Find other outlets for stress**—healthy amounts of exercise, journaling, or other relaxing activities.



**Make these fun family activities.** Try having a fun family movie night, go on a bike ride, or cook dinner together as a stress reliever.



## Eat Healthy on the Job

Eating healthy while on the job can be particularly challenging given the unpredictability of law enforcement duties. Advance planning and thoughtful discussion of the realities of shift work can assist in better eating habits while on the job.

Assemble a week’s worth of meals in advance to make it easier to eat healthy when facing an unpredictable and often shifting schedule.



**Having easy, healthy meal options ready** is especially important for night shift officers who may not have the same access to restaurants and grocery stores during their shift.

**Spend time each week** planning out meals, grocery shopping, and cooking lunches, dinners, or midnight meals.



**Make meal planning and preparation a family event – it can be fun.** Not only does this help your family prepare for the week ahead but it offers an opportunity to model good eating habits to your children.

- **Keep healthy snacks in your car, desk, or bike.** Almonds, a low sugar granola bar, or a banana can help tide you over until you can get a filling, nutritious meal rather than settling for the drive through.
- **Have some go-to healthy options at local restaurants.** Sometimes you need to buy meals for the day, having a list of favorite, healthy meal options at local restaurants and grocery stores makes choosing a nutritious option easier.
- **Enquire at local convenience stores** for access to a microwave or toaster oven to heat up your meals when you are out on the job.
- **Establish an eating routine**, to include a break from the stress of your job.
  - Get out of your car, off your bike, or out of the office when you eat to train your brain to have a set meal time—free of distractions and to encourage healthy food consumption.

<sup>i</sup> Dallman, Mary F. “Stress-induced obesity and the emotional nervous system.” Trends in Endocrinology & Metabolism 21, no. 3 (2010): 159-165.  
<sup>ii</sup> American Heart Association. Sugar 101. [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/Nutrition/Sugar101\\_UCM\\_306024\\_Article.jsp#Ws-Tkljwa70](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/Nutrition/Sugar101_UCM_306024_Article.jsp#Ws-Tkljwa70). Updated 2018.



## Eat Healthy at Home

Eating healthy at home can be nearly as challenging as eating healthy at work. Setting family routines when you can and being flexible with your shift schedule can lead to healthier family meals.

- **Make cooking a family event.** Create a family cookbook of favorite, healthy recipes for quick family meals.
  - Law enforcement is at a higher risk of obesity than civilians.<sup>iii</sup> Healthy eating is an important part of overall health and wellness.
- **Make a take-out favorite at home.** Homemade pizza or mac and cheese can be just as satisfying as the take-out version and you know all the ingredients that go into it.
- **Try new recipes regularly.** You might just find your new favorite meal.
- **Create a family dinner routine.**
  - Routinely having family meals are linked to reduced childhood obesity.<sup>v</sup>
  - Make family dinner a device-free zone, to promote family connectedness, and distraction free eating.



Device-watching while eating can lead to **37% increased odds of adulthood obesity.**<sup>iv</sup>



## How Can You Create a Healthy Lifestyle?

Being healthy is more than just working out or excluding all fatty or sugary foods. Find a balance in your diet, exercise, and remember it is about an overall healthy lifestyle, not a temporary diet.

### FOCUS ON VARIETY.

- Try new foods as a family.
- Choose greater variety in your food—color, nutritional makeup, ingredient makeup—this can lead to higher energy levels, which is crucial for long and unpredictable shifts.<sup>vi</sup>
- Aim for as many fruits and vegetables as you can. They make for an easy on-the-go snack to keep with you in the patrol car or in the precinct.
  - If the food can go bad, it is probably good for you.
- Remember the less processed your food is, the better it is for you.

**SERVING SIZE:** Pay attention to the serving size and how many servings there are per container. New FDA guidelines require the serving size to reflect what people are actually eating on average, not how much they should be eating.<sup>vii</sup>

**CALORIES:** Pay attention to your caloric intake. Consider the nutrients and energy you will receive from these calories; high calorie count may not be all bad if it is highly nutritious. Some labels may note calories from fat as well, which shows how many of the total calories come from fat.

**NUTRIENTS TO LIMIT:** The American Heart Association recommends aiming for only 5-6% of daily calories coming from saturated fats.<sup>viii</sup> Limit trans fat intake, as it raises poor cholesterol levels and increases the risk of developing heart disease. Trans fat typically comes from partially hydrogenated oils.<sup>ix</sup> Hydrogenated oils can be found in many foods, such as margarine, shortening, fried foods or packaged baked goods. Limit sodium intake to 1,500 mg per day or less. More can lead to high blood pressure, which is the leading risk factor of death in U.S. women and the second leading risk factor in U.S. men.<sup>x</sup>

### LEARN AND TEACH YOUR FAMILY TO READ NUTRITION LABELS.

#### Nutrition Facts

| Amount Per Serving            |                     | % Daily Value               |  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Serving Size 1 cup (300g)     |                     | Servings Per Container 6    |  |
| <b>Calories 358</b>           |                     | <b>Calories from Fat 90</b> |  |
|                               |                     |                             |  |
| <b>Total Fat</b> 5%           | 15%                 |                             |  |
| Saturated Fat 1.7%            | 25%                 |                             |  |
| Trans Fat 1%                  | 5%                  |                             |  |
| <b>Cholesterol</b> 50mg       | 29%                 |                             |  |
| <b>Sodium</b> 300mg           | 17%                 |                             |  |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 10g | 11%                 |                             |  |
| Dietary Fiber 2g              | 5%                  |                             |  |
| Sugars 10g                    |                     |                             |  |
| Added Sugars 5g               |                     |                             |  |
| <b>Protein</b> 10%            |                     |                             |  |
| <b>Vitamin A</b> 1%           | <b>Vitamin C</b> 3% |                             |  |
| <b>Calcium</b> 3%             | <b>Iron</b> 1%      |                             |  |

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

**NUTRIENTS TO EAT MORE OF:** Getting more of these nutrients, including dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron, can lead to better overall health.

**SUGAR:** Two types of sugar exist: naturally occurring sugar and added sugar. Many food labels show both separately. Many names can be used for added sugar in an ingredients list including “syrup”, “sweetener”, and sugar molecules ending in “-ose.” According to the FDA, “it is difficult to meet nutrient needs while staying within caloric requirements if you consume more than 10 percent of your total daily calories from added sugars.”<sup>xi</sup>



## Drink Enough Liquids

- **Recommended fluid intake:** 15.5 cups for men, 11.5 cups for women.<sup>xii</sup>
- **Use your thirst level as a preliminary guide** for fluid intake, although your need for fluids depends on:
  - Climate, including the temperature and humidity you are in.
  - Exertion levels, sweating means you need more fluids.
  - Overall health, certain medical conditions, including obesity and high blood pressure, require more water intake.
- **Keep in mind how your uniform might make you sweat or overheat more easily.** Drinking lots of fluids can help keep you hydrated underneath your heavy vest or tactical gear.
- **Don't drink your calories.** Drinks have a lot of hidden sugars and are a major contributor to obesity.<sup>xiii</sup> Water is the most ideal fluid as it has zero calories and no added sugars or fats.
- **Carry a refillable water bottle** with you to promote more water consumption throughout your day.
  - Make it a family challenge.

- Who can get to their recommend water intake the earliest, or who can drink only water throughout the day, no other beverages?
- Decorate or buy fun family water bottles. If your water bottle is fun you just might drink more water.



This publication is one in a series. For more family support resources please visit: [www.theIACP.org/ICPRIawenforcementfamily](http://www.theIACP.org/ICPRIawenforcementfamily)

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<sup>iii</sup> Zimmerman, Franklin H. "Cardiovascular disease and risk factors in law enforcement personnel: a comprehensive review." *Cardiology in review* 20, no. 4 (2012): 159-166.

<sup>iv</sup> Tumin, Rachel, and Sarah E. Anderson. "Television, home-cooked meals, and family meal frequency: associations with adult obesity." *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* 17, no. 6 (2017): 937-945.

<sup>v</sup> Horning, Melissa L., Robin Schow, Sarah E. Friend, Katie Loth, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, and Jayne A. Fulkerson. "Family dinner frequency interacts with dinnertime context in associations with child and parent BMI outcomes." *Journal of Family Psychology* 31, no. 7 (2017): 945.

<sup>vi</sup> Raynor, Hollie A., and Maya Vadiveloo. "Understanding the Relationship Between Food Variety, Food Intake, and Energy Balance." *Current obesity reports* 7, no. 1 (2018): 68-75.

<sup>vii</sup> U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Changes to the Nutrition Facts Label. <https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformationLabelingNutrition/ucm385663.htm>. Updated January 2018.

<sup>viii</sup> American Heart Association. Saturated Fats. [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/FatsAndOils/Fats101/Saturated-Fats\\_UCM\\_301110\\_Article.jsp#.W598j4jwa7](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/FatsAndOils/Fats101/Saturated-Fats_UCM_301110_Article.jsp#.W598j4jwa7). Updated August 2015.

<sup>ix</sup> American Heart Association. Trans Fat. <https://healthyforgood.heart.org/Eat-smart/Articles/Trans-Fat>. Updated August 2015.

<sup>x</sup> American Heart Association. Sodium and Your Health. [https://sodiumbreakup.heart.org/sodium\\_and\\_your\\_health](https://sodiumbreakup.heart.org/sodium_and_your_health). Updated 2018.

<sup>xi</sup> U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Changes to the Nutrition Facts Label. <https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformationLabelingNutrition/ucm385663.htm>. Updated January 2018.

<sup>xii</sup> Mayo Clinic. Nutrition and Healthy Eating. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/water/art-20044256>. Updated September 2017.

<sup>xiii</sup> Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. The Nutrition Source: Sugary Drinks. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-drinks/sugary-drinks/>. Updated June 2012.