

# WHAT LEADERS CAN DO TO **INCREASE READINESS**

TOP MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURY PREVENTION  
RECOMMENDATIONS

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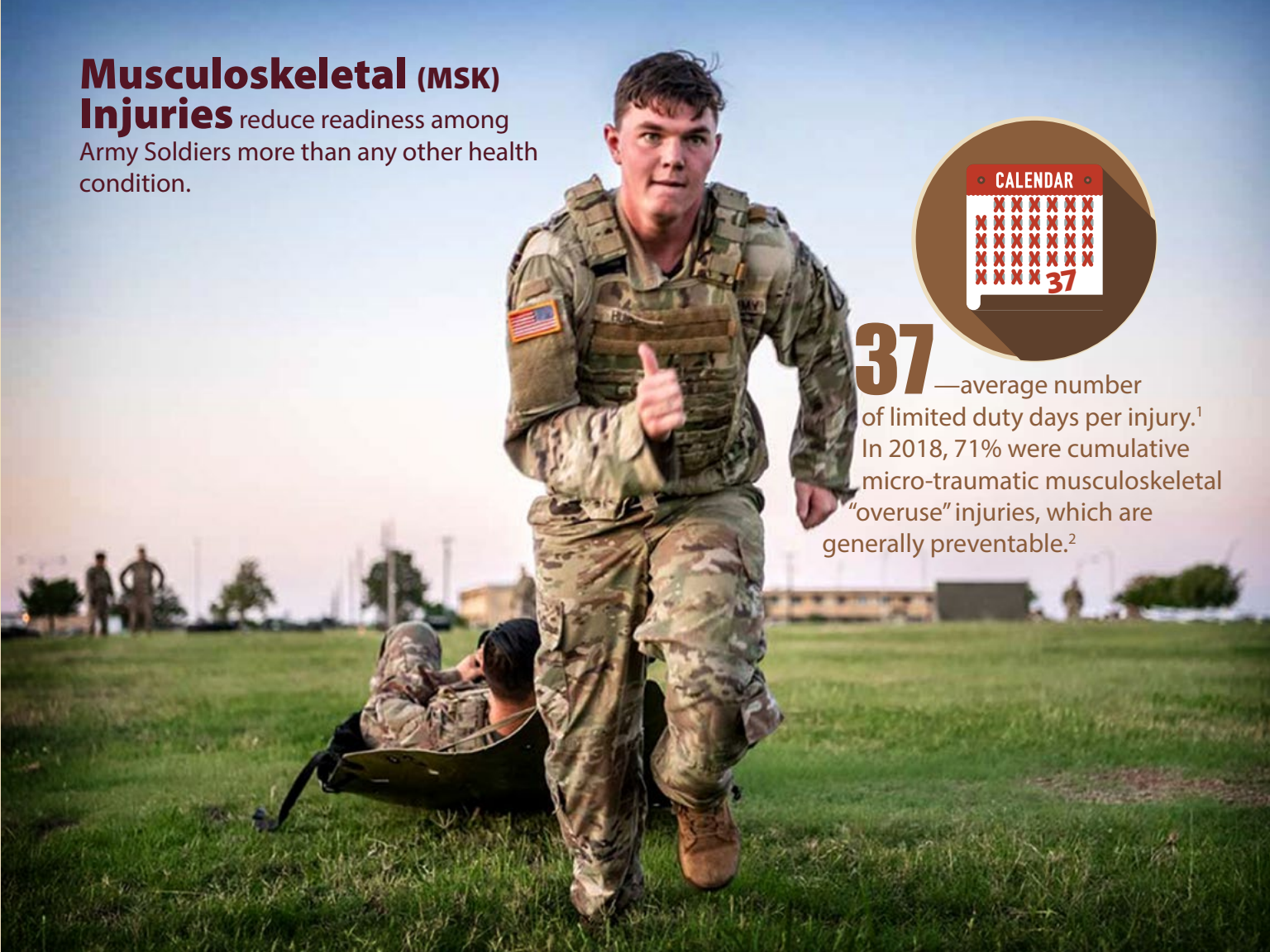
**U.S. ARMY**



**Musculoskeletal (MSK) Injuries** reduce readiness among Army Soldiers more than any other health condition.



**37** —average number of limited duty days per injury.<sup>1</sup> In 2018, 71% were cumulative micro-traumatic musculoskeletal “overuse” injuries, which are generally preventable.<sup>2</sup>



**COVER**

U.S. Army paratroopers assigned to the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade pull security while participating in Exercise Immediate Response at Pocek Training Area, Slovenia, May 15, 2019.



## HELP YOUR SOLDIERS DECREASE THEIR **MSK INJURY RISK, a Summary:**

- 1. Limit long-distance running** and increase interval training to prevent over-training among your Soldiers. Follow the training schedule in Field Manual (FM) 7-22 (*Holistic Health and Fitness, October 2020*)
- 2. Refer the following Soldiers to an Army Wellness Center**
  - a. The slowest 25% of each gender for the 2-mile run times
  - b. Soldiers close to the Army Body Composition (AR 600-9) standards
  - c. Soldiers interested in learning stress management strategies
  - d. Soldiers interested in tobacco cessation



For locations of the Army Wellness Centers, check out:  
<https://phc.amedd.army.mil/organization/hpw/Pages/ArmyWellnessCenters.aspx>



- 3. Encourage Soldiers to complete a full course of rehabilitation** with physical therapy after MSK injury, especially Soldiers who do not yet feel confident in their ability to perform physical military tasks
- 4. Encourage Soldiers with concerns about their sleep** to make an appointment with their primary care physician or a behavioral health provider
- 5. Refer Soldiers close to AR 600-9 standards** or outside of standards to a registered dietitian and the Army Wellness Center
- 6. Ensure your training personnel** maintain current Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) and height/weight data in the Digital Training Management System (DTMS) to help identify high-risk Soldiers
- 7. Consult with your local behavioral health provider** to implement resilience and stress management programs
- 8. Encourage all leaders to communicate** about healthy sleep, activity, and nutrition behaviors with their Soldiers





# 1 LEADER RECOMMENDATION

Increasing long runs in unit PRT **does not** automatically improve APFT 2-mile run times.<sup>4,5</sup>



UNIT PT RUNNING

Commanders who control the amount of running can spend more time developing strength and the other skills to further enhance readiness such as shorter, faster drills to increase run times.

Limit long-distance running and increase interval training to prevent over-training among your Soldiers. **There is good evidence this can reduce injuries by 20 to 54%.<sup>3</sup>**

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
WEEK 1 Endurance Focus	Sprint for 30 seconds, then recover and walk for 60 seconds, and other endurance conditioning activities	No running; strength/muscular endurance activities	Ability group run, and other endurance conditioning activities	No running; strength/muscular endurance activities	Release Run, and other endurance conditioning activities
WEEK 2 Strength Focus	No running; strength/muscular endurance activities	Sprint for 30 seconds, then recover and walk for 60 seconds, and other endurance conditioning activities	No running; strength/muscular endurance activities	Foot march	No running; strength/muscular endurance activities

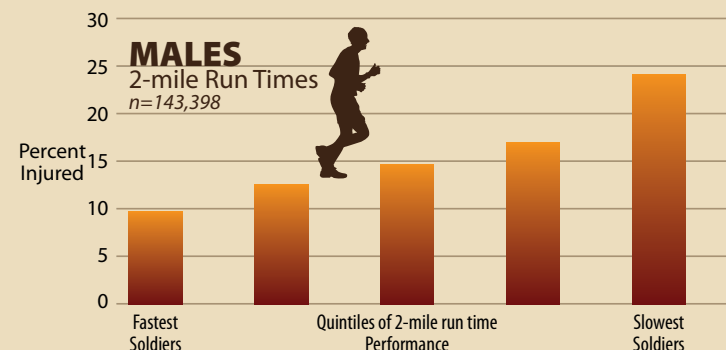
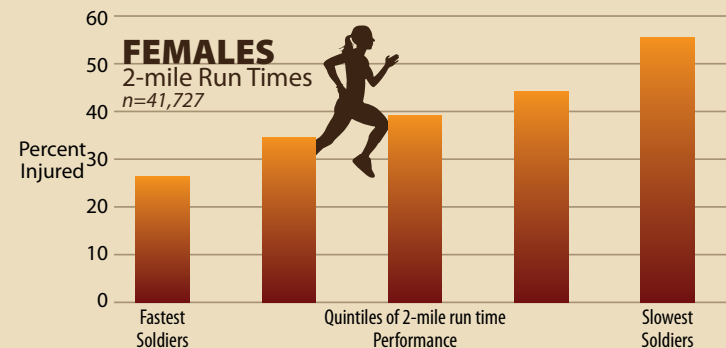
*Note alternate weeks between endurance and strength focus. This schedule is not meant to be all-inclusive.*



## 2 LEADER RECOMMENDATION

Refer the following Soldiers to an Army Wellness Center for assistance:

- The slowest 25% of **Soldiers** of each gender in a unit for 2-mile run times
- **Soldiers** close to the Army Body Composition (AR 600-9) standards
- **Soldiers** interested in improving their sleep, activity, and nutrition habits
- **Soldiers** interested in learning stress management strategies
- **Soldiers** interested in quitting tobacco or vaping since there is strong evidence that tobacco use can increase the risk for MSK injuries<sup>4,6</sup>



Soldiers with higher aerobic fitness have lower injury risks.<sup>7</sup>



*Army Wellness Centers (AWC) provide healthy behavior change through evidence-based health education, health coaching, and advanced fitness testing technology for Soldiers, Family Members, Retirees, and DA Civilians within a standardized model to enhance readiness and achieve optimal health at 35 Army installations.*



### 3 LEADER RECOMMENDATION

**Encourage Soldiers to complete a full course of rehabilitation** with physical therapy after MSK injury, especially Soldiers who do not yet feel confident in their ability to perform physical military duties.

Previous MSK injury is a risk factor for future MSK injury<sup>8</sup> and may negatively impact confidence to return to duty.<sup>11</sup>



There is growing evidence that Service members with low resilience and confidence are less likely to return to duty following an injury.<sup>11-13</sup>

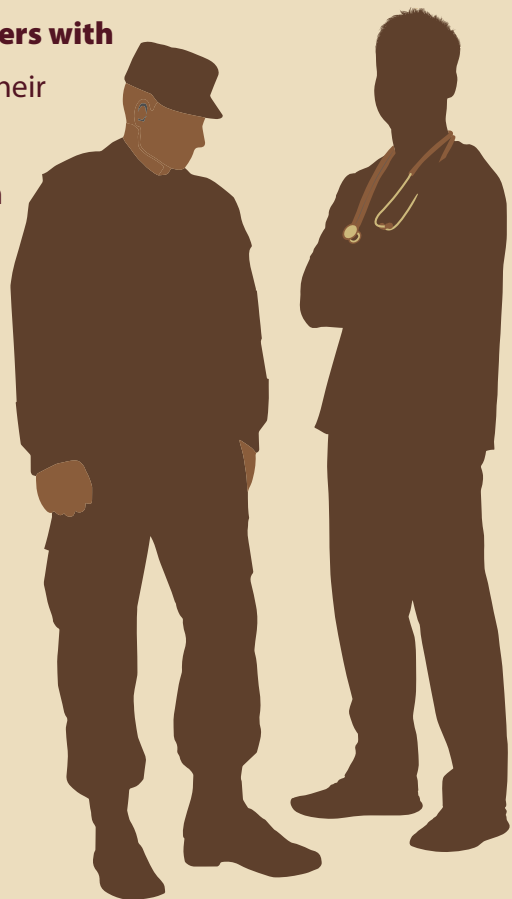




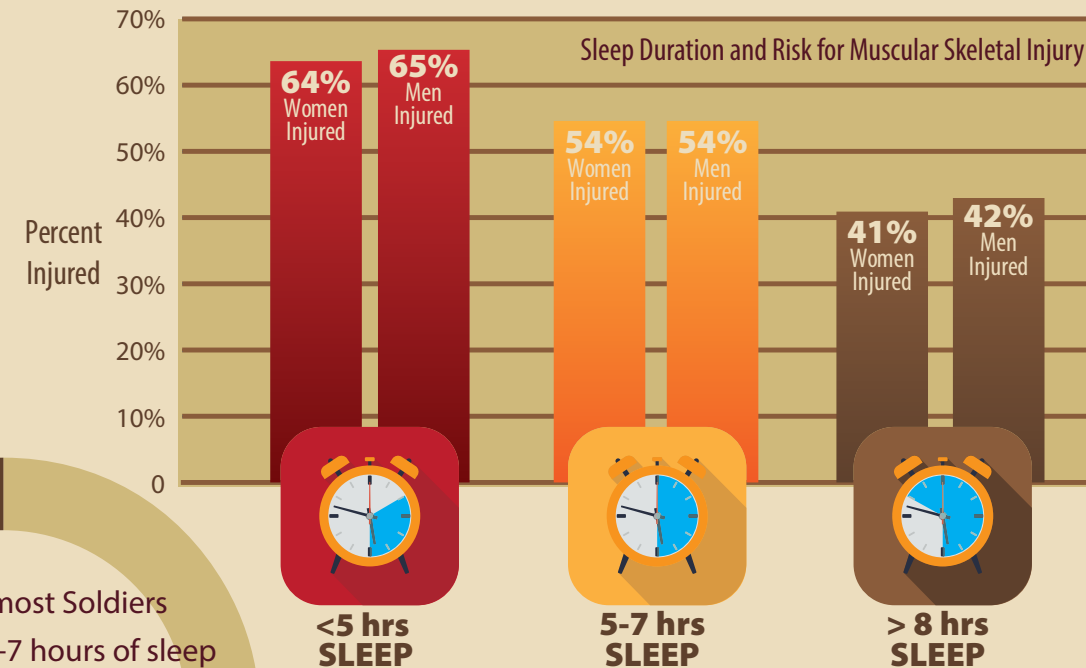


# 4 LEADER RECOMMENDATION

**Encourage Soldiers with concerns** about their sleep to make an appointment with their primary care physician or a behavioral health provider.



In 2018, most Soldiers reported 6-7 hours of sleep during weeknights/duty nights. However, 1 in 3 Active Duty Soldiers reported getting less than 6 hours of sleep on weeknights/duty nights.<sup>2</sup>

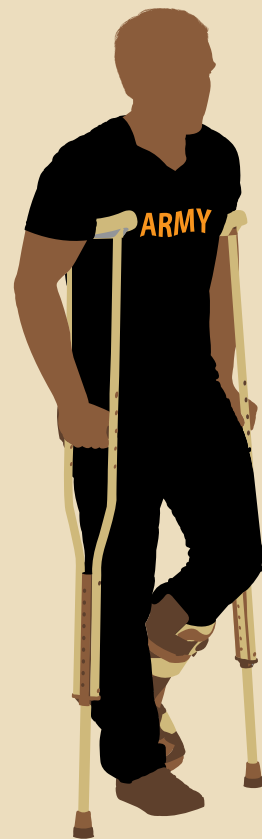


Army researchers found that the risk for MSK injury increases as sleep duration decreases.<sup>14</sup>



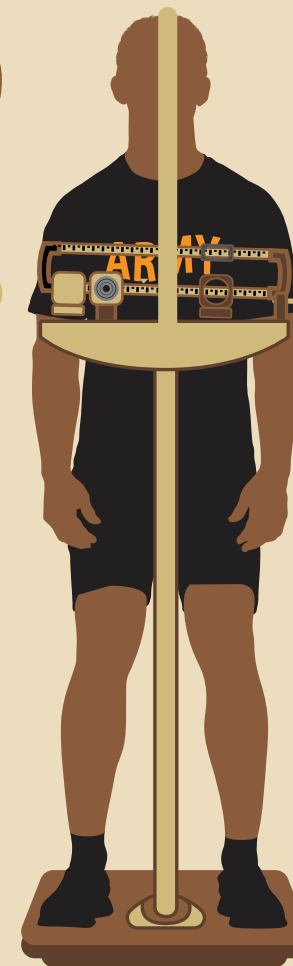
## 5<sup>LEADER</sup> RECOMMENDATION

Refer Soldiers close to standards or outside of Army Body Composition standards (AR 600-9) to a Registered Dietitian and the Army Wellness Center for a proactive approach to help achieving desired goals.



# AR 600-9 WEIGHT FOR HEIGHT STANDARDS

There is moderate evidence when Soldiers do not meet the AR 600-9 standards and have low aerobic fitness are at an **increased risk for MSK injury.**<sup>2</sup>





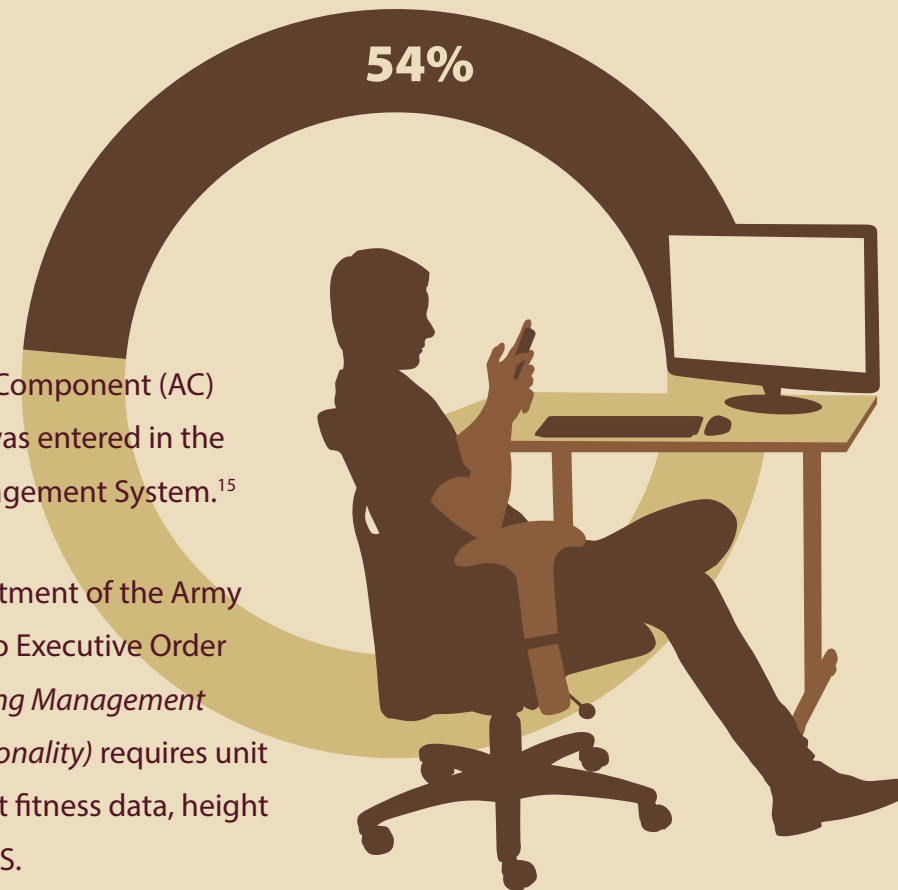


## 6<sup>LEADER</sup> RECOMMENDATION

**Ensure your training personnel maintain** current Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT), and weight/height data in the Digital Training Management System. This will help you identify high-risk Soldiers.

**Only 54%** of Active Component (AC) Soldier fitness data was entered in the Digital Training Management System.<sup>15</sup>

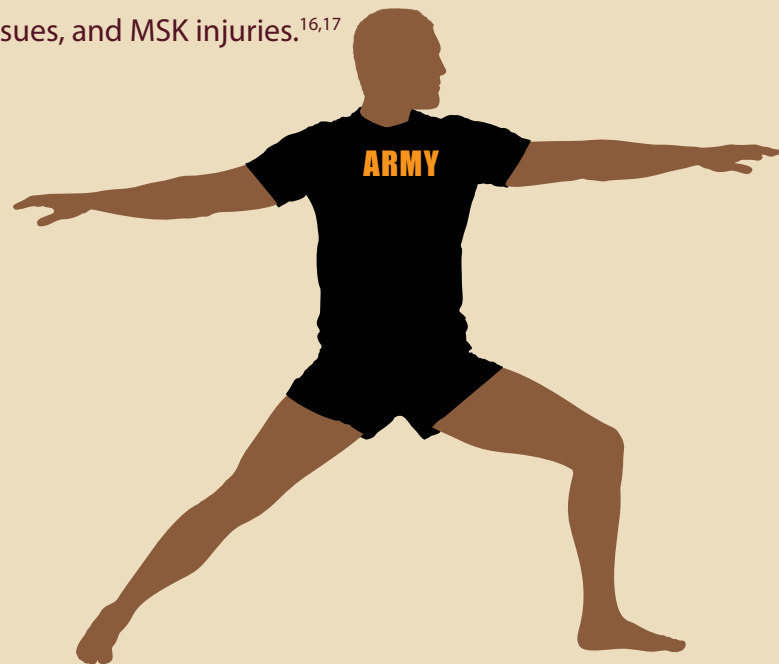
Headquarters, Department of the Army Fragmentary Order to Executive Order 081-17 (*Digital Training Management System (DTMS) Functionality*) requires unit commanders to input fitness data, height and weight into DTMS.





# 7 LEADER RECOMMENDATION

**Consult with your local behavioral health provider** to implement resilience and stress programs. There is growing evidence for the link between stress, behavioral health issues, and MSK injuries.<sup>16,17</sup>







# 8<sup>LEADER</sup> RECOMMENDATION

**Encourage all leaders** to communicate about healthy sleep, activity, and nutrition behaviors with their Soldiers.<sup>19</sup>



## Performance Triad

The Performance Triad provides Soldiers with the tools and knowledge to achieve high levels of performance as a Professional Soldier Athlete.

<https://p3.amedd.army.mil/>

In a FY15-16 U.S. Army Forces Command study<sup>19</sup>, **leader interactions with Soldiers were more important** than leaders' own sleep, activity, and nutrition (SAN) behaviors in influencing Soldiers' SAN behaviors.

Aerobic exercise was the only SAN behavior that Soldiers reported to be influenced by leaders' behaviors. Leaders need to talk to Soldiers about healthy food choices and healthy sleep patterns.

**Engaged Leadership Matters!**



“Our Focus is on leadership and building cohesive teams. ‘This Is My Squad’ is about creating fit, disciplined and well-trained teams. It is about listening to and understanding our people. It’s about showing compassion and empathy for all. Most importantly, it is about junior **leaders creating positive energy**, making decisions and taking action within their squads to support teammates.”

– SMA Michael Grinston, AUSA, 13 OCT 20

## Engaged Leadership Matters!



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