1. Between the “Quarantine 15” and the starchy and high fat foods of the holiday season, you may have gained a bit of weight. Dietary supplements may be a tempting quick way to lose those few pounds, but they are not always safe. January is Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center’s Healthy Weight Month. Find tips for lifestyle changes to lose weight safely at go.usa.gov/xPJ5E.

2. January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month. Taking a daily 400 microgram dose of folic acid, maintaining a healthy weight, checking with your provider about medications, staying up-to-date on vaccines and avoiding tobacco, drugs and alcohol during pregnancy can all help prevent certain birth defects. Learn more at cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects.

3. The Drug Education for Youth (DEFY) program is looking for commands to sponsor the program in their local area. Want to sponsor DEFY in your area or learn more about it? Contact the DEFY program office by email at MILL_N17_DEFY@navy.mil or visit the website at www.DEFY.navy.mil.

4. That CBD ointment or hemp body wash you got in your stocking for Christmas was a kind gesture, but it can put your career at risk. Remember that ALNAV 074/20 prohibits the use of hemp-derived products, including CBD, regardless of how it’s used and regardless of claimed THC content. Protect your career.

Coca Tea and Weight Loss

It’s a new year and for many people, that means setting ambitious goals for improving their health, often including losing weight. Despite the discouraging fact that most dieters will regain the weight they work so hard to lose, we try and try again, perhaps through different methods. A supplement claiming to make weight loss faster and easier may be hard to resist. One supplement touted as an “all-natural” tool for weight loss, increased energy, improved mood and mental clarity is coca powder, which can be made into a tea or paste. The tea is widely available in many South American countries, sold in cafes and street carts. Although it is illegal in many countries, including the US, it is still available for purchase from online vendors. Besides the fact that quick fixes are ineffective for long-term weight loss, coca powder or tea ingestion is risky because it will result in a positive cocaine result.

What is coca tea?

Coca tea is an herbal tea made from the raw or dried leaves of the coca plant. A cup of coca tea contains approximately one gram of coca leaves and 4.2 milligrams of coca alkaloid. A typical dose of recreational cocaine contains between 20 and 30 milligrams of coca alkaloid. Drinking coca tea results in a positive urinalysis two hours after ingestion and at least 36 hours after.

Losing Weight in a Healthy Way

Maintaining weight loss from a supplement or stimulant is very difficult. Not only does one’s metabolism adapt and slow down to try to retain the weight, research indicates that calorie deprivation leads to cognitive changes and a preoccupation with food. Experts recommend, instead of radical weight loss strategies, focusing on adding healthy habits permanently to your lifestyle. For example, in addition to including vegetables in meals where they may end up passed over for tastier options like meats or starches, they can also be eaten as snacks to help increase consumption. Reducing intake of sugar and highly processed foods and adding moderate exercise are also key to maintaining a healthy weight and reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease.

Protecting Your Health and Career

Just as CBD has become ubiquitous and promoted as a cure-all, coca powder and tea are becoming more widely available and promise a myriad of health benefits. Service members must carefully consider the risks not only to their health but also their careers when encountering products that are derived from prohibited substances. Operation Supplement Safety (OPSS) has information on supplements so that service members can make informed decisions about their use. Visit them at opss.org.
FAMILY VIOLENCE & THE HOLIDAYS

A 2013 Department of Veterans Affairs study revealed that approximately 22 percent of active duty service members were perpetrators of intimate partner violence (IPV). The stressors of military service may heighten the risk of partner conflict and violence. The current pandemic combined with the common stressors of the holidays can increase potential tensions in the home.

Alcohol consumption — which often increases during the holidays — and drug misuse may also increase risk. A 2015 report from the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health finds that substance misuse both increases following abuse and increases the risk of victimization. Women reporting partners’ heavy drinking were five times more likely to experience IPV. It is important for service members and their spouses to understand how to identify abuse and where to find help.

Identifying Abuse

Abuse can be perpetrated by anyone in any kind of relationship, and it can take many forms. Abusive behaviors may initially seem benign but increase in severity over time. Emotional abuse includes, but is not limited to, insulting, humiliating or calling a partner names. Isolation may include controlling where a partner can go, who they can see, what they can wear or how they can spend their money. It could also include using jealousy and possessiveness to justify abusive behaviors. Intimidation, coercion or threats may include threatening to leave, or to harm a partner, children, pets or even oneself. It could also include forcing a partner to drop abuse charges or to engage in illegal activity. Sexual abuse includes pressuring or forcing a partner to have sex against their will. These behaviors are incompatible with a loving, respectful relationship.

Effects of Abuse

Nearly 90 percent of military spouses responding to a small 2017 survey did not report abuse, often citing a fear of hurting their spouse’s career or feeling the abuse was “no big deal.” But staying in an abusive relationship can lead to depression, PTSD and even medical conditions such as high blood pressure. And children who witness IPV are at increased risk of behavioral problems, guilt and even becoming abusers themselves.

Finding Help

Domestic violence is a crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Individuals who are experiencing IPV can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233, and military families can access resources via the Military Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 or by visiting RealWarriors.net. Seeking help is the best way to protect yourself and your children.