



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND

SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH



Physical Training Injuries II

Besides being a normal part of being in the military, regular physical training (PT) is one of the most important things you can do for your health. Being physically active can help manage weight, reduce the risk of disease, and even improve your brain health. PT is “good for you; good for me” (*just like the Jody says*), but if we do it wrong or aren’t prepared, it can harm us. As of 31 July this calendar year, we found more than 200 PT-related mishaps in our database, which equates to significant lost time and degraded warfighting readiness. Please read and learn from our fellow Sailors and Marines who suffered the consequences of not being prepared for, or not properly performing, their PT sessions.



- **Be Honest.** Before a Sailor's semi-annual Physical Readiness Test (PRT), the Command Fitness Leader (CFL) asked the required pre-physical activity questions, and the Sailor verbally responded "yes" to having medical clearance to participate. After a warm-up session, the Sailor completed sit-ups and push-ups and then had a water break. He continued with the PRT, attempting the stationary bike, but stopped 30 seconds short of the 12-minute cardio requirement. The CFL asked if he was alright as the member walked around the gym, stating he was okay. As the Sailor proceeded downstairs, he stopped to rest on a bench before suddenly collapsing. A CFL checked the Sailor for a pulse and immediately started cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and continued until relieved by first responders. The Sailor was pronounced dead shortly before arriving at the hospital. The autopsy report concluded the cause of death was atherosclerotic coronary heart disease (narrowing of the arteries to the heart due to plaque buildup). —*The member was warned of his health condition, prescribed medication, and encouraged to change his lifestyle. However, he disregarded medical follow-up and wasn't truthful on the Physical Activity Risk Factor Questionnaire (PARFQ). Be honest with yourself and on the risk assessments; it'll keep you alive.*
- **Hydrate Before You Participate.** During a command PT session, a Sailor felt lightheaded and started seeing spots before passing out due to the intensity of the workout. Emergency Services arrived and rushed the Sailor to the local medical facility. He was diagnosed with severe dehydration and received one week of limited duty. After further investigation, the Sailor admitted to not eating or drinking 12 hours before the PT session. —*Not eating or drinking is a sure way to dehydrate. Don't follow this fellow's lead. Hydrate at least the day before and continue during and after PT. Even with all the sports drinks on the market, good ole H2O works best. "It does the body good!"*
- **Listen to Your Body.** The command hosted a voluntary high-intensity workout called “MURPH,” named after Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy, a U.S. Navy SEAL who was killed in action in Afghanistan. The workout involves running, push-ups, pull-ups and squats. A Sailor completed the workout and repeated the same exercises four days later alone. Upon completion, he experienced reduced strength in both arms, headaches and discolored urine. The Sailor checked into the emergency room and was diagnosed with rhabdomyolysis (a condition where muscle tissue breaks down rapidly). He received seven days of SIQ and one month of limited duty. —*This Sailor exercised regularly and was considered in good physical condition. Overexertion can happen to anyone if they are not cautious, regardless of their fitness level. Heed the warning signs, allow ample recovery time between workouts and recognize when to seek medical advice.¹*

¹Warning signs of rhabdomyolysis (rhabdo) include: Muscle cramps, aches, or pains that are more severe than expected; dark urine (tea- or cola-colored); or feeling weak or tired, unable to complete job tasks or finish a workout routine. It's also possible to have rhabdomyolysis and show no symptoms. If you do begin to show these symptoms, seek medical care immediately!

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- **Warm Up Properly.** The command was hosting a weekly PT session, when a Sailor who participated in one of the drills felt a sharp pain in her neck after turning abruptly. She waited until after the PT session and reported to the medical clinic when the pain worsened. Medical prescribed pain medication with 72 hours sick in quarters and seven days of limited duty. Relevant fact: The Sailor didn't warm up properly and just jumped into the drills. — *This event reminds us that our bodies can sometimes react unexpectedly, and seemingly minor actions can have unforeseen consequences. Ease into the workout. Warming up with dynamic stretching can save you from plenty of pain.*



- **Know your Limitations.** While conducting a fireman carry, a Marine suddenly collapsed. The Marine was treated on scene and transported to the naval hospital for further assessment. Medical personnel determined that the Marine suffered a left hip strain caused by a previous fractured pelvis and gave him 21 days of limited duty. The report noted the Marine knew his condition but didn't want to slow down for fear of failing the test. — *We applaud this Marine for his “Gung Ho” attitude, but motivation and wisdom are a balance. Know your limitations and operate within them. Your body will quickly remind you if you don't.*

Key Takeaways

1. **Honesty is your health's best policy.** Being truthful about your health conditions and limitations is crucial. Concealing medical issues or pushing through despite pain from a prior injury can lead to severe consequences. Prioritize your well-being and communicate your concerns with trainers or medical professionals. Don't make a potentially fatal mistake. The PARFQ is a self-screening tool for your own protection.
2. **Make hydration your foundation.** Proper hydration before, during and after PT can't be overstated. Dehydration hurts your performance and can lead to health complications. Drink adequate (and good) fluids to support your body's functions and optimize your workouts (and to not pass out or die).
3. **Warm up before you form up.** Always start with a thorough warm-up routine. Dynamic stretches and light cardio activities increase blood flow, improve flexibility and prepare your muscles for more intense movements. This routine reduces the risk of injury and enhances overall performance. Using proper form and technique is another essential element to prevent injuries and maximize the effectiveness of your workouts. *Check out the My Navy HR website for a complete guide to dynamic warm-up exercises here:*
<https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/Portals/55/Support/Culture%20Resilience/Physical/Dynamic%20Warm-Up%20Attachment.pdf?ver=ZMrxNi6WRqOfENnm9e8VeQ%3D%3D>.
4. **Overexertion can be painful.** Pushing your body too hard or too fast can lead to injuries and health issues. Gradually increase the intensity of your workouts to allow your body to adapt and minimize the risk of strains, sprains or more severe conditions like rhabdomyolysis.
5. **Staying in shape is easier than getting in shape.** If you can maintain a regimen of 150 minutes of physical training per week, you win! Stop talking about it, and **BE** about it. Start getting (and staying) in shape today. Like they used to say in the old shoe commercials, “Just do it!”

And remember, “Let's be careful out there.”