



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND

SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH



SA 24-05

Gym Mishaps

Two months into 2024, many people's New Year's resolutions have already gone out the window, with one of the most abandoned goals being getting to the gym. For most of those people, it's a lack of willpower that puts an end to their ambitions, but for the Sailors and Marines you'll soon read about, it was ill fate and injuries that ended an otherwise promising new year of fitness. In this dispatch, we take a look at folks whose carelessness in the gym had unfortunate yet predictable results. Indulge us for a few minutes as we recap the slips and trips of our "Workout Warriors" and help keep your gym resolution injury-free.



- **Rack Em Up.** A Sailor was doing squat repetitions with a weight bar and plates. He was too close to the squat rack, though, and his plates hit it during his up motion. Upon clipping the rack with the plates, he lost his balance, fell backward and crushed one of his fingers between the weight rack safety catch and the bar. —*During your reps isn't the time to learn you don't have the space to do them. Take a few extra seconds **beforehand** to check your placement so the rack doesn't interrupt your set.*
- **In Your Face!** A Marine was doing weighted sit-ups holding a 25lb weight above his head (*you probably see where this is going, but let's continue*). With sweaty hands and fatigue setting in from the previous exercise, the Marine was destined for failure. The combination led him to lose his grip while coming up, which led to the weight coming down...on his face. —*There's nothing wrong with wearing gloves for specific exercises. They can make a big difference in gripping a metal weight, especially if your hands are sweaty and your arms are already tired. We'd prefer a firm grip over a plate to the face any day.*
- **Leg Com-Press.** A Sailor was completing a final set on the seated leg press machine at the base gym. He loaded the last weight, got into position, pushed the weights up to begin his set, attempted to lower the weights in a controlled fashion...and failed drastically. The weights came down (*uncontrolled*), squashed his legs into his chest, and he felt a rib "pop out." He promptly went to the emergency room (ER). —*There is pushing yourself and then there is crushing yourself. This Sailor did the latter. Be careful not to take on too much weight, and use proper form. Our "Superhero of the Squat" painfully demonstrated why you shouldn't push yourself to failure on the leg press machine; there's nowhere to bail out if your legs give out.*
- **"Jane! Stop This Crazy Thing!"** —George Jetson. A Sailor was taking a light jog on the treadmill. This is generally a leisurely, no-stress activity—until your untied shoelace gets caught in the belt (*which is exactly what happened. Cue thoughts of his feet getting sucked into the motor like the escalator scene from Final Destination 2*). Fortunately for our "Titan of the Treadmill," nothing permanently terrible happened. He simply tripped and sprained his ankle. Even so, a sprained ankle is painful and earned him two weeks on light duty. —*That's a lot of time out of the fight for not taking the two seconds to check your laces. The gym might seem relatively safe, but gym equipment (even your shoes) can be dangerous if not respected. Check your laces and set yourself up for success by wearing the proper clothing correctly.*
- **The Opposite of a Super Hero Landing.** A Marine was "getting his cardio on" on a stair-master. When he was done, he jumped backward off the machine instead of stepping down (*because why be "basic" like that*). When he landed his backward dismount, he heard and felt a loud "pop" in his knee. He went home to rest (*we know you're a Marine, but don't just "walk it off"!*). The following day, though, he felt significant pain and went to the ER, where he learned that he tore his meniscus. —*Many of us feel motivated after a workout and want to finish the exercise with a bang, but be careful not to injure yourself needlessly during the dismount. It may cost you in pain and weeks out of the gym. It's not the Olympic gymnastics finals.*

Gym Mishaps



- You Missed a “Spot.” A Sailor was lifting weights at the gym. The report didn’t specify what exercise he was conducting, but he was using a spotter for it (*good on him for using a spotter, but...*). Spotters are always a wise option, except the Sailor didn’t communicate with the spotter, and the spotter had poor hand placement. The Sailor was trying to get ten reps in but ran out of gas at eight. He abruptly dropped the weights, crushing and degloving the middle fingers of each of the spotter’s hands (*Yikes!*). —*This workout gone wrong is a cringe-worthy example of doing the right thing but in the wrong way. Getting help with a set is smart, but you have to let your buddy know when you need their help. If you are*

the spotter, you should “spot” when your partner is losing momentum so you can catch the weight. And for your hands’ sake, watch where you put them!

- A Case for Pre-op Checks. A Sailor was doing an ab workout to prepare for his Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) and decided to try out the “Roman Chair”—*it sounds like an ancient torture device, but it’s great for ab workouts*. The Sailor, experienced in using the apparatus, adjusted the horizontal plane but did not adjust or check the vertical plane (*an oversight she’d later regret*). When she started her set, the retaining pin that holds the vertical plane in place was unlocked, so the leg restraint separated from the machine, causing the Sailor to fall backward, twisting her knee and fracturing her ankle. —*This experienced gym-goer may have just been hurrying to get her ab workout in. You wouldn’t skip pre-underway or pre-flight checks on duty, so follow the same mindset at the gym. Your body parts will thank you.*

- And now, for the most common gym injury. A Marine finished a workout on a leg press and was trying to remove the 45lb weight to put it away (*good job, Marine, always restack the weights*). The Marine’s hands were sweaty and he didn’t carry the weight by the handle, so it inevitably the weight slipped and fell onto his foot (*this sounds eerily familiar to the “In Your Face” example*). The Marine “painstakingly” walked to medical, where he was told he fractured his toe. —*Whether it’s from sweaty hands or tired grips (or both), a significant number of our gym mishaps are from dropping weights onto feet (and sometimes faces). Use the handles and try to keep your feet and face out of the fall zone. As we mentioned before, gloves can be a good idea too.*

Key Takeaways

Getting to the gym is an integral part of being healthy and fit, and being fit is an essential part of being a Sailor or Marine. To make sure your trips to the gym end with stronger muscles and not injured body parts, we encourage you to keep these tips in mind:

1. **Know your limits.** We may want to push ourselves to our physical limits to get stronger, but injuring yourself will set you back. As you progress, don’t sacrifice proper alignment and form to lift heavier weights because no one will be impressed when you hurt yourself.
2. **Don’t be too proud to ask for help.** A spotter can help you push yourself that much farther, but safely. Failing to use a spotter can result in losing the weight or tearing a muscle.
3. **Pay attention.** It’s easy to get caught up in your workout, lose track of your surroundings or be careless when doing repetitive activities compounded by fatigue. Keep those things in mind and slow down a bit as you navigate your way around the gym. As our Spotter narrative shows, this takeaway applies whether you’re working out or helping out.

And remember, “Let’s be careful out there”