

Effects of obesity in the united states navy

[Health & Medicine](#), [Obesity](#)



When Americans hear the words United States Sailor what image comes to their minds? Do they see the all American boy standing tall, wearing his dress blues uniform with his white hat tilted to the side? Does he look like the sailor on the Cracker Jack box? That used to be the image of the U. S. Sailor back when the Greatest Generation was fighting during World War II. Now, all a person has to do is go online and search U. S. Navy Sailor in the search engine and they will find unlimited pictures and videos of sailors doing every day things as well as supporting our interests around the world.

With the invention of the World Wide Web, sailors are not only asked to do their jobs at sea but also be impeccable ambassadors of the American people on shore. Because of this important part of being a service member, it is imperative that today's sailor resemble that all American boy or girl.

While sailors are adults and must take responsibility for their own actions, lack of training and attention to dietary health has contributed to many sailors discharge from service due to being out of Navy regulated physical standards. The U. S.

Navy celebrated its 235th birthday on October 13th 2010, but the way sailors are being officially evaluated physically is only about 35 years old. Operational Navy Instruction, (OPNAVINST) 6110. 1 was implemented on June 16, 1976 from a directive given by the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). The stated purpose of this instruction was " To implement a physical fitness program for Navy personnel, regular and reserve, that will meet the need for physical stamina and strength necessary for combat effectiveness and mobilization as directed by Secretary Of The Navy Instruction (SECNAVINST) 6100. " (Hodgdon, 1999). In the 6110. 1, the term obesity was defined as "

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excessive accumulation of fat in the body manifested by poor muscle tone, flabbiness and folds, bulk out of proportion to body build, dyspnea (difficult or labored breathing), and fatigue upon mild exertion, all of which detracts from military appearance” (Hodgdon, 1999). The fitness program that was established from this instruction was nothing more than a modified version of an aerobics program developed by a Dr. Ken Cooper.

This aerobics program was a set of warm up exercises and basic calisthenics that were used based on a points system. This first physical fitness instruction did not include a physical fitness test. On July 17, 1980, the Navy issued an updated instruction for physical fitness. This instruction was OPNAVINST 6110. 1A which was virtually identical to the original 6110. 1 with the exception of adding a fitness test. This test was implemented to set certain standards that all sailors would have to adhere to as a way for the Navy to track the physical readiness of its sailors.

For example, a male age 17-25 had to perform a minimum of 30 sit-ups in two minutes; 20 push-ups; four pull-ups (optional); complete a 1.5 mile run/walk in 16:30 (OPNAVINST 6110. 1A, 1980). On June 29, 1981 Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 1308. 1 was implemented. The biggest difference of this directive was that the Navy implemented a weight control program to add to its physical fitness program. As the Navy started to fine tune its physical testing of its sailors, the chain of command added and subtracted those elements that they believed define a model sailor.

On August 7, 1986 OPNAVINST 6110. 1C was issued navy wide (Hodgdon, 1999). There were several major changes to the 6110. 1. One of the more

severe changes was that all Navy personnel were required to take the Physical Readiness Test (PRT) twice a year. Another change was a health risk screening that needed to be done before a sailor was allowed to participate in the PRT. Yet another change was that the body fat assessment was to be separated from the PRT and was to be conducted as an individual assessment. Under this instruction a new technique and new standards for measuring body fat was established.

One of the most important changes that came from this instruction was that new consequences for failing the body fat were established. Under the new standard body fat assessment, if a sailor was diagnosed as obese they were not allowed to participate in the PRT until cleared by the medical staff. If the sailor was diagnosed as obese consecutively in a 16 month period they were to be screened for separation from active duty. It is because of these changes in how the Navy Chain of Command viewed its sailors, that the sailor themselves had to re-evaluate how they handled their careers. Before the implementation of the 6110. series instructions, all a sailor had to do to be viewed as outstanding was make sure that they were the subject matter experts in their field. This meant reporting for duty early, studying all of the rate training manuals, and following the orders of their superiors. The only physical standard that a sailor had to maintain was be able to complete their duties in an exemplary manner and be able to get through a hatch on a ship to fight a fire if need be. They were not considered a bad sailor, or not good at their job, simply because they filled out their uniform a little bit more than the guy standing next to them.

When it was time to take their rate advancement exam they did not evaluate what that sailor looked like in their uniform, the chain of command just wanted to make sure that the sailor was knowledgeable about his/her job. These days, to be eligible for advancement you not only need to know your job better than the other sailor, you also need to look better than him too. Before the implementation of these new guidelines, a sailor's evaluation marks were issued based on job performance. With the changes in the physical fitness instruction come changes in the evaluation process as well.

Now if you fail a Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA), it has to be marked and documented on your annual evaluation. Because of the ever changing rules and regulations of the physical fitness standards of the Navy, the Department of the Navy (DON) is now implementing more formal training geared toward nutrition and weight control. With this training, sailors are being taught that there are several benefits to a balanced diet. They are being trained that a healthy diet does not just improve their physical health but it also contributes to their mental health.

Sailors now have the tools they need to start and maintain these healthy eating habits. The Navy Nutrition and Weight Control Self-Study Guide is the Navy's principal tool that enables service members to improve their health and fitness (Cox, 1996). This guide is being issued to all personnel who are enrolled in the Fitness Enhancement Program (FEP). This program is a mandatory program for those sailors who fail any portion of a PFA. This program is also open to any sailor who wants to learn how to take care of their bodies in a healthy way.

With this new mindset of training sailors to take care of their bodies for health reasons and not just to look like the sailor on the Cracker Jacks box, more sailors are taking this knowledge with them after they transition from military life to civilian life. There is a new standard now for being a sailor. In the past it was all about going out to the bars with your shipmates and having a good time. With the current tempo of operations, a sailor must be ready physically, as well as mentally, to answer America's call wherever they are needed. The Navy is no longer turning a blind eye to sailors being out of physical standards.

If sailors cannot balance a healthy lifestyle as well as train for their jobs, they may be the ones standing on the pier waving good bye to their ex-shipmates. References Chief of Naval Operations (OP-09) (1908). Physical Fitness. Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 6110. 1A. Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. 17 July. Cox, L. (1996). NAVY Nutrition and Weight Control Self-Study Guide. Washington, DC: United States Navy. Hodgdon, Ph. D. , J. A. (1999, August 18). A History of the U. S. Navy Physical Readiness Program from 1976 to 1999. Human Performance Department Naval Health Research Center.