



From the Commander's Example to the Strength of the Unit: The Value of Physical Preparation

Published on 08/10/2025

Before the intervention of former Minister of Defense Elisabetta Trenta, the Italian Armed Forces based recruitment and service retention on **objective physical efficiency parameters**. At the center of this system was the **Body Mass Index (BMI)**, a scientific tool that measures the ratio between weight and height and, although with some limitations, represented a guarantee of **readiness and health**.

Maintaining a **BMI within precise limits** – 30 for men and 28 for women – ensured that every soldier could effectively meet the physical and mental demands of service. Today, more than ever, that principle retains its validity: **a trained body is not only a functional requirement but a reflection of discipline and self-care**.

Scientific evolution allows us to go beyond old schemes, introducing more refined criteria that evaluate **body composition as a whole**. Health, in fact, is not a number, but **a balance**

between muscle strength, endurance, metabolism, and mental well-being. Staying in shape means **protecting oneself**, preventing fatigue, supporting concentration, and living better.

Modern research confirms that **optimal physical condition** improves circulation, cardiorespiratory capacity, and metabolism, but also **mental clarity** and **stress management**. A trained body becomes a **tool of psychological efficiency**: regular movement stimulates the production of endorphins, reduces anxiety, and enhances decision-making ability.

In a military context, where **clarity and readiness** are fundamental, physical fitness is an **indispensable ally**. Being in shape, in this sense, means **being ready to act, to endure, to support comrades**. It is a condition that unites **body and mind, strength and self-control**, and strengthens the deep bond between the individual and the Institution.

The Commander's Example: The Strength That Inspires

Every military leader knows that **leadership starts with example**. A commander in full physical form does not only convey authority but **confidence**. His energy, posture, and endurance are concrete signals of **dedication and balance**.

Physical preparation, in fact, is not just about performance: it is a **language that communicates inner solidity**. Those who take care of their body demonstrate **attention, self-control, and respect for the mission**. An optimal physical condition, supported by a healthy lifestyle, promotes **calm, concentration, and clarity**, essential elements for those who must **make quick decisions and lead** other men and women.

Training together, **sharing effort and determination**, creates an authentic bond among unit members. Every run, every exercise becomes **a symbol of cohesion, team spirit, and belonging**. Shared effort unites more than any order, because it stems from the **desire to improve together**.



Modena running with the Military Academy - Company of Cadet Officers led by their Commander

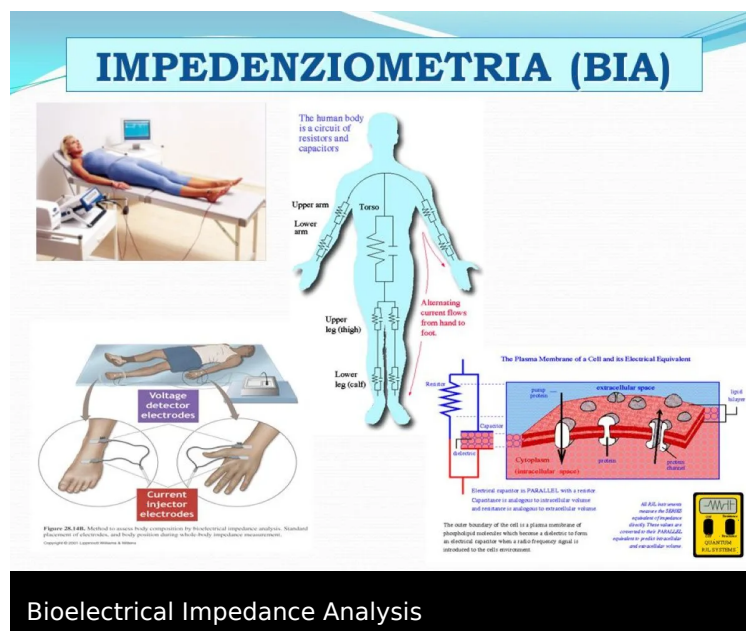
The most recent studies confirm that **regular physical activity stimulates cognitive functions**, improves memory, and enhances the ability to **remain calm even under pressure**. An **efficient body supports the mind**, and a **trained mind guides the body**. It is a virtuous cycle that increases **resilience, concentration, and self-esteem**.

In this balance lies the true strength of the modern soldier: **taking care of oneself is not vanity, but duty**. The **trained body is a tool of service**, a means to be more effective, more lucid, more human.

The Path of Science: A Modern Model of Well-being and Performance

The evolution of assessment methods now allows for **more accurate and personalized measurement of physical fitness**. The **Body Mass Index** remains a useful base but can be complemented by scientific tools that analyze **body composition in detail**.

Among these, one of the most effective is the **bioelectrical impedance analysis**, a simple and non-invasive test that uses a mild electrical current to evaluate the **percentage of body fat, lean mass, body water, and basal metabolism**. In a few minutes, thanks to the different conductivity of tissues, the tool provides an “internal map” of the body, revealing hydration levels, muscle mass quality, and fluid distribution.



Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis

This information is valuable because it allows for **monitoring real health status**, not just apparent weight. The bioelectrical impedance analysis helps to understand whether a weight gain is due to muscle improvement or excess fat, aiding in **personalizing workouts** and **optimizing physical recovery**. In the military field, this means being able to precisely manage **athletic preparation**, prevent fatigue, and maintain high efficiency standards over time.

Parameters such as the **percentage of body fat** and **lean mass** thus allow for better understanding of one's body and maintaining it efficiently. Reference values – **no more than 22% body fat for men and 30% for women**, with a **lean mass not less than 40%** – define an **ideal balance between strength, endurance, and metabolic health**.

Monitoring these data periodically, through **bioelectrical impedance analyses or functional tests**, does not mean undergoing control, but **embracing awareness**. Knowing oneself is the first step to improvement. And **improving every day is the essence of military discipline**.

A healthy body not only guarantees better performance but also promotes **recovery, sleep quality, and emotional management**. Regular training means **increasing brain oxygenation**, improving memory, and maintaining stable mood. It is a **form of personal care that becomes collective care**, because a healthy soldier is a soldier **more motivated, more focused, more serene**.

Promoting the culture of physical fitness within Defense means **investing in the country's human capital**. It means building **healthier, more resilient, more ready armed forces**. Every training program, every check, every small step towards a more efficient body is a piece

of a larger goal: **to serve better, live better, grow together.**

Physical fitness is not an obligation, but a privilege. It is the opportunity to discover how much one's body can be a **tool of energy, balance, and pride.** It is the tangible symbol of **dedication, courage, and vitality** of those who serve the Republic with a **clear mind and strong heart.**