



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

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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**.

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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.

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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**.