



A school lunch serving of a hot dog, french fries and carton of milk for lunch. Photo: (Photo by Sykospike/iStockphoto)

## Physically Unfit: Over 475,000 Young People in Maryland Unable to Join Military

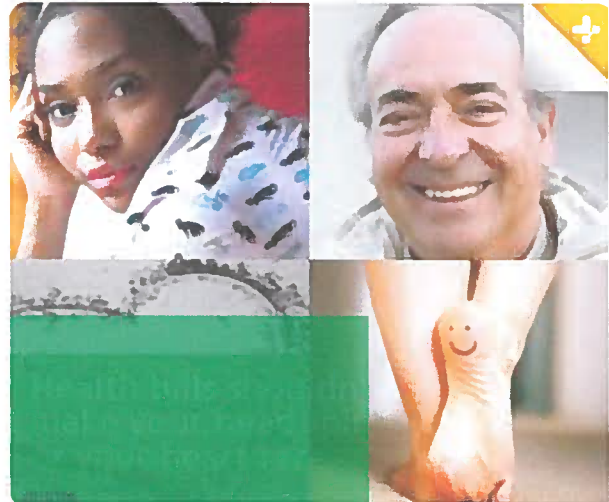
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By **Deborah Green**, Baltimore  
Fitness Trends Examiner

After a long battle of depleting America's physical education classes, [school lunches](#) are now in the forefront of scrutiny as several military applicants are being rejected because they are overweight.

A menu of pizza, tacos, hot dogs and cheeseburgers served in local school cafeterias are now coming to a halt.

In Maryland, over 475,000 young people are unable to join the military because they are physically unfit, according to a press release by [MISSION: READINESS](#).



This long fight to revamp America's [school lunches](#) is now back in motion as a group called, [MISSION: READINESS](#), entailing retired generals and admirals join forces along with [U.S Senator Richard Lugar \(R-IN\)](#) and U.S. Agriculture Secretary [Tom Vilsack](#), that are pushing a call to action against school lunches.

A new study released on Tuesday implies that 9 million young adults and 27 percent of all Americans ages 17-24 are too overweight to join the military.

Increasing rates of childhood obesity has fled the country due to inactivity and fast food eating. Now the military once thriving off physically fit applicants now have to reject young adults because they are overweight.

Years ago applicants were rejected because of their lack of a high school diploma, criminal record, but now are told they are "Too Fat to Fight."

The military requires prospects to pass the weight standards and physical training standards. The [Physical Readiness Test \(PRT\)](#) entails categories testing flexibility, cardiovascular fitness and muscular strength and endurance.

"If you don't meet the weight standards for your height you have to get measured. Say you're fifty-four inches and your weight is supposed to be 150 pounds and you weigh 155 pounds, that means you're overweight and you have to get measured," says, [Gunners Mate Chief \(Surface Warfare\) Winfred Owens](#), who is the Command Fitness Leader for Navy Recruiting District of Philadelphia.

Their measurement method consists of measuring the neck and waist for men and neck, natural waist and hips for women. There is an allowed maximum body fat percentage.

"The maximum percentage for males is ages 17-39 is 22 percent. For females ages 17-39 is 33 percent. Now 40 and over is 23 percent for males and females 40 and over is 34 percent," GMC (SW) Winfred Owens said.

This means they must pass all three categories of [calisthenics](#) of jumping jacks, push-ups and curl-ups and must pass the 1.5 mile run/walk or 500-yard or 450-yard swim to join Boot-Camp.

[Gunners Mate Chief \(Surface Warfare\) Winfred Owens](#), who is the Command Fitness Leader for Navy Recruiting District of Philadelphia, oversees recruiters in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, says that applicants must meet the physical and weight requirements in order to join the armed services and nutrition plays a key role.

Military officials after World War II pushed Congress to establish a national school lunch program for nutritional purposes. During this time many recruits were rejected due to lack of proper nutrition and undersized growth.

Today the issue is bigger than getting kids to eat their lettuce and tomatoes. It's an issue of building a healthier lifestyle to maintain America's fitness.

In order to serve in the military it now means people need to be physically fit and it's starting at grade level to implement healthy eating habits.

Health initiative campaign programs like [First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move campaign](#) or reality TV-show [Food Revolution](#) hosted by Celebrity Chef [Jamie Oliver](#) is getting America back-to-the basics of nutritional value.

If a new program is instituted to restructure America's [school lunches](#) it could be a big step for the military.

"I'll make it easier because you have more applicants that can get into the military," [GMC \(SW\) Winfred Owens](#) said.

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