

## **NDSTC Medical Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's):**

### **1.) Where are the medical standards for diving duty listed?**

All medical standards for U.S. Navy personnel are found in the Manual of the Medical Department, Chapter 15 (Physical Examinations and Standards). All standards found within Chapter 15 are applicable to candidates initiating dive training at the Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center (NDSTC) regardless of branch of service. In addition to these requirements, Articles 15-102 (Diving Duty Examinations and Standards) and 15-105 (Naval Special Warfare and Special Operations) state more stringent requirements that are applicable to divers and diving candidates. \*\*\*All candidates attending training at NDSTC must meet the applicable standards for his or her training program, including candidates from the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Coast Guard.\*\*\*

### **2.) Why do I need my Tympanic Membranes (TM's) examined?**

A diver is exposed to pressures greater than that experienced in the normal environment. In order to successfully tolerate this increase in pressure, a diver must equalize the pressure differential between the environment and his or her middle ear. This pressure equalization is achieved via a Valsalva Maneuver. The TM's should be visualized on a physical exam while the diving candidate successfully performs the Valsalva Maneuver.

### **3.) What is a Valsalva maneuver and why do I need it?**

A Valsalva Maneuver is a maneuver that forces air from the pharynx into the middle ear via the Eustachian tubes. Most divers accomplish this by blocking the nasal passages, closing the mouth, and simultaneously increasing the pressure within the airway in the same manner as exhaling a breath.

### **4.) What's a PPD and why do I need it?**

A PPD is a common medical test performed to evaluate whether or not you have been exposed to the organism that causes Tuberculosis. It is possible to be exposed to Tuberculosis, be a carrier of the disease, transmit it to others, and not feel "sick" therefore it is very important to test for exposure to this disease. All diving candidates must have a current PPD test prior to receiving a pressure test within a hyperbaric chamber or initiating dive training. The PPD test should be documented on the Adult Immunizations Record (NAVMED 6230/4) and the Adult Preventive and Chronic Care Flowsheet (DD Form 2766).

### **5.) I had a positive reaction to my last PPD. Can I still complete my dive physical?**

A positive reaction to a PPD requires that you be evaluated by a physician. In most cases, this will require treatment with a medication known as INH. Once INH therapy has been initiated, an Undersea Medical Officer should be contacted to determine when you will be eligible to begin initial dive training.

**6.) My audiogram displays hearing loss outside the acceptable limits. Can I still attend dive school?**

An audiogram is required for commissioning or enlistment. The initial audiogram for service members is recorded on DD 2215, also known as the Reference Audiogram. Periodic audiograms following the initial Reference Audiogram are recorded on DD2216E also known as the Hearing Conservation Data form. Abnormal audiograms which display hearing loss outside the acceptable limits are disqualifying for diving duty; however it is possible to obtain a medical waiver for this condition. The examining physician should initiate a waiver of physical standards for this condition. Once a waiver has been approved, a candidate may begin initial dive training.

**7.) Who can perform a dive physical?**

Any physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner can perform a dive physical. Once the physical is complete, an Undersea Medical Officer (often referred as a DMO or Diving Medical Officer) must review the physical examination and recommend a status of physically qualified (PQ) for diving duty.

**8.) How long is a dive physical good for?**

A dive physical must be less than 24 months old prior to beginning initial dive training. Once a diver has completed dive training at NDSTC, a dive physical is required every five years prior to age 50, every 2 years prior to age 60, and then every year beyond age 60. This requirement is in addition to the yearly Preventive Health Assessment (PHA).

**9.) There is not an Undersea Medical Officer (UMO) or Diving Medical Officer (DMO) at my duty station. What should I do?**

Please see the answer to question 8. Additionally, it is possible to fax a copy of all medical documentation to the nearest UMO to you in geographical location and request that they sign the physical exam and special duty abstract. This should be done only as a last resort.

**10.) What is the difference between an Undersea Medical Officer (UMO) and a Diving Medical Officer (DMO)?**

An Undersea Medical Officer is a Navy Medical Officer that has been trained in diving medicine, submarine medicine, and radiation health. All qualified Navy Undersea Medical Officers (UMO's) are also Diving Medical Officers (DMO's). The Army and Air Force often send physicians through the NDSTC Diving Medical Officer course. These physicians are considered Diving Medical Officers; however they do not have an expertise in submarine medicine or radiation health. Additionally, only a qualified Undersea Medical Officer (UMO) has the authority to make a recommendation for changing standard U.S. Navy Treatment Tables during the treatment of a diving casualty to his or her respective Commanding Officer.

### **11.) What is the purpose of a Special Duty Abstract (NAVMED 6150/2)?**

In regard to diving duty, a Special Duty Abstract serves two purposes. The first purpose states that a diving candidate has been thoroughly evaluated by an Undersea Medical Officer and that the candidate is physically qualified (PQ) for diving duty. The second purpose is that it provides documentation for the successful completion of a pressure test which is required prior to initiating initial dive training.

### **12.) There is no hyperbaric chamber in my area. What should I do?**

Typically, all U.S. Navy and other military diving units (SEALS, Army Engineering Divers, Marine Reconnaissance, SEA BEE Underwater Construction Teams, Army Special Forces Divers, and Air Force Combat Controllers and PJ's) have hyperbaric chambers. Additionally, many aviation facilities within the military have hyperbaric chambers in order to treat altitude DCS cases. Any certified U.S. military chamber with adequate staffing can perform diving candidate pressure tests. All possible efforts should be made to complete this pressure test prior to arriving at the Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center (NDSTC). If all efforts to obtain a pressure test have been exhausted, it is possible to complete the pressure test once you arrive at NDSTC; however all other requirements for initial dive training must be met.

### **13.) What should I do if I failed my initial pressure test?**

There are many reasons that a person might fail a pressure test. The Valsalva Maneuver is very easy for some people to learn while others have a very difficult time learning how to perform this maneuver. If the Valsalva Maneuver is difficult for you, seek out the help and guidance of divers or aviation personnel that frequently have to use this maneuver. A second very common reason for inability to successfully pass a pressure test is congestion or cold symptoms. You should attempt a pressure test only when you feel healthy and do not have any signs or symptoms of a cold or upper respiratory tract infection. Another common reason you may not be able to pass a pressure test is related to your anatomy. Some people's anatomic structures allow them to be successful divers without any difficulty, whereas other people will always have a difficult time with pressure changes. The most common cause for this is a condition known as Eustachian Tube Dysfunction. Eustachian Tube Dysfunction does not respond well to medication or surgery therefore this is a disqualifying condition for diving duty. If you are concerned about having Eustachian Tube Dysfunction, you should seek out an evaluation by your primary care provider. Your primary care provider will perform an examination and then determine if you need to be seen by an ENT physician (Ear, Nose, and Throat Specialist). If a diagnosis of Eustachian Tube Dysfunction is made, this condition is permanently disqualifying for diving duty.

**14.) What is an NAVPERS 1200/6?**

A NAVPERS 1200/6, also known as U.S. Military Diving Medical Screening Questionnaire is a tool for Undersea Medical Officers to evaluate a candidate's suitability for diving duty. This screening tool is used in conjunction with the medical history and medical examination (DD 2807 and DD 2808). It is designed to catch new medical conditions that have occurred since the DD 2807 and DD 2808 were performed.

**15.) Why do I need a Class I or Class II Dental Exam prior to dive training?**

Dental disease, particularly cavities, can lead to severe pain and permanent damage to one's teeth when combined with changes in pressure. Proper dental hygiene, frequent exams and periodic dental cleanings will help reduce the risk of having a diving related dental problem.

**16.) If I get injured during dive school will I be automatically dropped from training?**

Each case is evaluated individually. Every possible effort is made to prevent injuries while participating in high risk training. If an injury does occur, the NDSTC medical staff acts aggressively to return the candidate to diving duty as soon as possible. If an injury requires extensive medical therapy, each case is individually evaluated and a medical recommendation is made to the Training Officer at NDSTC. The Training Officer takes the medical input and makes a recommendation to the Commanding Officer via the chain of command. The Commanding Officer ultimately makes the decision of whether or not a candidate is retained at NDSTC while he or she recovers from an injury. Many factors are considered in this decision and cannot be detailed fully here.