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Dental fitness system adopted by NATO

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Abstract

Background: The Portuguese Armed Forces play a crucial role in international missions, as they are committed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN). It is worth noting that oral health is a significant factor in the military selection process, which underscores the importance of preventive care and minimizing dental emergencies. **Objective:** This text outlines the dental requirements for military personnel in NATO countries, as well as the dental fitness classification system. The database contains information on NATO's classification for selection purposes. **Methods:** The search terms *Dental Fitness*, *Military, Dental Record*, and *Dental Condition* were used to conduct a thorough search of articles on the official NATO website, PubMed, and ScienceDirect databases. Subsequently, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. **Results:** According to the NATO guide, military personnel are classified into two low-risk dental fitness classes: Dental Fitness Class 1, which does not require any treatment or appointments, and Dental Fitness Class 2, which includes pre-existing dental conditions that seldom result in emergencies within 12 months. The guide does not specify the high-risk classes. Dental Fitness Class 3 is typically assigned when there is a possibility of an oral emergency within the next 12 months or if the condition is left untreated. Dental Fitness Class 4 is assigned to military personnel who require an annual examination, have undetermined dental status or incomplete records. Ideally, Class 1 and 2 military personnel are selected, although definitions and assessments may change. It is worth noting that some countries accept Class 3 conditions, while others prioritize the highest classification in case of doubt. **Conclusions:** These classifications help to standardize and enable each country to select the most suitable soldiers for missions, thereby reducing associated risks.

Keywords: dental fitness; military; dental record; dental condition

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