



FIT *for* DUTY

Working for your Wellness

November 2021

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Behavioral Health EMDR Therapy Changes One Firefighters Life

by Kim Wiesmann, Public Health Specialist & Wellness Coach, MPH

"I finally hit my rock bottom and broke. I realized after separating from my wife for the second time in July of this year, and snapping at my boss there was a larger issue that I was dealing with and did not want to admit," said Capt. Tom Beckner. It was during this time, Capt. Beckner googled EMDR to finally get the help he needed. "The change in me has been amazing."

Research shows firefighters are repeatedly exposed to environments and situations that can cause both physical and mental harm. Work related stressors have been associated with negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse and PTSD. EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) Therapy is an effective method used to treat people who are recovering from traumatic incidents, work related stressors and other hurtful life events. EMDR can assist with a "breakthrough" if you've been emotionally stuck.

What does the process look like?

- The counselor will often work with you to identify a target memory and the negative beliefs associated with the memory.
- Next, explore what could be a positive memory to move towards.
- Finally, the counselor guides the client through Rapid Eye Movement exercises alternated with brief explanations of what you are experiencing to allow the brain to process small chunks at a time.



Capt. Beckner noted, "I want anyone that is reading this to understand, you are not alone." He goes on to say, "If anyone wants to talk to me more about my struggles, where I have come from, and where I am now. I am here for you. I will help you in any way I can. **Do not let yourself get in the dark tunnel and feel like there is no way out. There is hope.**" To learn more about EMDR, [click here](#) to watch an introduction video.

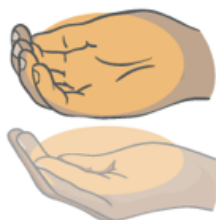
PORTION CONTROL USING YOUR HAND



A serving of protein
= 1 palm



A serving of
vegetables = 1 fist



A serving of carbs
= 1 cupped hand



A serving of fats
= 1 thumb

NUTRITION

Portion Control Can Help Decrease Body Fat

by Kim Wiesmann, Public Health Specialist & Wellness Coach, MPH

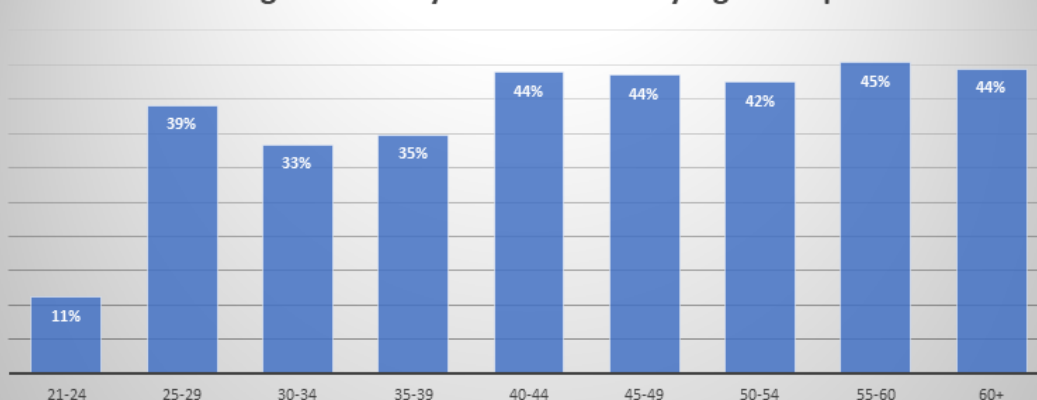
When was the last time you looked closely at your body fat percentage during your Physical Fitness Evaluation (PFE)? Your body fat percentage tells you the percentage of fat (adipose tissue) stored in the body. Fat is typically stored under the skin or as visceral fat (around the organs). While the body requires some fat for warmth, energy, and organ protection, most Americans have too much of it. The graph below represents the percentage of IFD firefighters that are over the standard percentage for Body Fat by age group (Males) based on the seca body composition analysis conducted during the annual PFE.

Too much body fat can lead to increased risks of heart disease, stress fractures, cancer, stroke, and sleep issues. It can also lead to decreased mobility, self-esteem and sexual/reproductive health. For firefighters, it's imperative to meet the body fat standards in order to physically and mentally do your job well.

Portion Control can help decrease your body fat by creating a caloric deficit. Use the hand guide to the left to help you build your plate. (For additional help, contact Carlos Wood for individualized nutrition coaching.)

- **Protein:** Aim for 1-2 palms of protein dense foods at each meal. Ex: A piece of baked chicken, a cup of Greek yogurt, 2 hard boiled eggs.
- **Vegetables:** Aim for 1-2 fists of vegetables. Ex. A handful of carrots, a small salad, a cup of steamed broccoli.
- **Carbs:** Aim for 1 cupped hand of carbs. Ex. A small service of brown rice, oatmeal, diced potatoes.
- **Fats:** Aim for 1 thumb of healthy fats. Ex. Cheese, dark chocolate, almond butter.

Percentage Over Body Fat Standards by Age Group-Male





Don't be afraid to ask for help. Asking for help is the key to wellness. If you can break the cycle of stigma and be humble enough to say, "Yes, I need help." That would be amazing.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Meet Chief Doug Abernathy

Chief of Peer Support

Chief Abernathy moved to Indianapolis in 1986 from East Chicago. While working for Methodist Hospital, he was connected to Chief Mark Moorman, who talked him into applying for the Indianapolis Fire Department. He fell in love with the application process and knew this is where he was supposed to be. Chief Abernathy is married and has one son.

1. How did you end up as the Chief of Peer Support?

I was working as the Chief of Health and Safety. Chief Malone wanted to create a new position involving peer support. I just felt it really fit my personality. I like to talk to people. I care about people. I have learned over time that Peer Support is a job for all of us.

2. What do you find most rewarding about your position?

Being able to approach firefighters who have taken the chance to get help and got better. When I can walk through the halls of headquarters and see their smile, give them a hug and hear them say they are doing great...that does a lot for me. Knowing I've had conversations with them at a time when they are in a lot of pain, to see them come out on the other side, is such a blessing.

3. How did the Athletic Club Fire impact you? [Note: Chief Abernathy was one of the responding companies to the Athletic Club Fire in 1992.]

It effected me immensely. It gave me the realization of just how dangerous our job is on so many levels. I saw how simple mistakes on the fire-ground can cause death, pain, depression and more, all from one single fire. I remember how intently we were all stunned and frightened after the fire. Some of us didn't want to fight fire again. What made us strong was the fellowship. We got together quite a bit after the deaths. I was numb for almost two years after that.

4. What is the future of Peer Support?

Peer support will have a much bigger umbrella as we bring on our retirees. We'll continue to ask more of our brothers and sisters to look out for each other. We all need to be looking out for the well-being of each other.

DID YOU KNOW?

All IFD Firefighters get unlimited counseling sessions per issue & family member assistance through Life Services EAP. Their number is (800) 822-4847. The Health and Safety Division also has nine Peer Support Specialists, Chaplains, Addiction Recovery Coach, Wellness Coach and other Administrative individuals trained in Peer Support. You can access their contact information and more on the Wellness Resources page. [Click here for more information.](#)



CANCER PREVENTION

Firefighters on the Run Against Melanoma

by Kim Wiesmann & Qing Wang, IFD Firefighter

On Saturday, October 9th, IFD firefighters took part in the annual Outrun the Sun Race Against Melanoma to celebrate the newly established partnership between IFD and Outrun the Sun. The Health and Safety Division is working with the organization to develop a pilot educational program aimed specifically at firefighters for early detection and skin cancer awareness. Once it's complete, it will be published on IFD Resources under Health & Safety.

Some research on firefighters shows an elevated prevalence of melanoma in the firefighter population. Sam DiGiovanna, with Lexipol, says, "The risk of skin cancer is likely higher for firefighters for two reasons: We spend a lot of time outside, often without taking precautions such as wearing long pants and sunblock. And, our skin absorbs carcinogenic chemicals that collect on our faces, hands and PPE at fires."

Protect yourself:

- Check the Out Run the Sun [Melanoma Risk Calculator Here](#) and read the early detection guide by [click here](#).
- Wear sunscreen everyday with a minimum SPF 15.
- Wear clothing that covers your arms and legs when possible. Hats also offer protection.
- After every fire, make sure to follow the proper decor procedures. See SOP 6.3.3.2 Post-Fire Decontamination on [IFD Resources](#).
- Frequently perform self-skin exams and see a dermatologist regularly for a full-body skin check.
- Take pictures of spots on your skin that you are concerned with in order to notice changes over time.

DID YOU KNOW?

Proteam Tactical Performance (PTP) is working for you at the IFD Health & Wellness Center (HWC). If you have a minor orthopedic injury, strain/sprain while on-duty, you can opt to be seen by PTP athletic trainers immediately at the HWC, if the injury occurs Monday-Friday between 7am-5pm. You can also decide to be seen at the HWC the following morning between the hours of 7am-8am during the walk-in period (weekdays only). You can also contact the Health and Safety Division to schedule an appointment later in the day.

Remember, it is the responsibility of the firefighter to complete the [on-line Injury Report](#). [Click here](#) for more info on PTP.

