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Naval Special Warfare Command  
SEAL/SWCC Motivator Guidance on Visual Standards  
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Below is a brief description of the vision requirements for candidates interested in NSW training for use by SEAL and SWCC motivators. As BUMED is the authority for such guidance, this information should serve only as a "rough guide" to help you navigate through the complex regulations governing refractive surgery in SEAL and SWCC candidates.

First, the candidate is often deterred by the term "disqualified." He should understand that many individuals who have a refractive error, or who have had eye surgery, can receive a "waiver" that will allow them to be accepted into training.

The standard visual requirement is that the candidate should have at least 20/40 in the best eye, and 20/70 acuity in the other eye, and both eyes must be correctable to at least 20/20 using standard glasses. Waivers are often granted to individuals in whom their refractive error is close to these values, so applicants with such values should be encouraged.

*NOTE: waivers are available to candidates with at least 20/70 in the best eye and no worse than 20/100 in the other eye.*

The corneal refractive surgery physical standards and waiver policy for the Navy and Marine Corps was revised on 10 April 2000. This modification is of note to those interested in applying for Naval Special Warfare training. "The following interim change to Chapter 15, Article 15-66, paragraph (2)(C)(6) of Reference (A) is effective immediately: (2XCX6) Excimer laser photorefractive keratectomy (PRK) is not disqualifying for Special Warfare duty. Candidates for entry into Diving Duty, including Special Operations and Special Warfare, must have a three-month waiting period following their most recent PRK corneal surgery prior to their qualifying examination."

Refractive surgery had been disqualifying in the past. PRK is now an acceptable treatment for operators and those entering NSW training. Waivers can also be given to personnel who have had the LASIK procedure and would like to enter into BUD/S training. Other forms of refractive surgery are disqualifying, and no waivers are given. The amount of refractive error (i.e. myopia, hyperopia, or astigmatism) that was present before surgery cannot exceed the current visual standards for entry into the service. In other words, if the amount of nearsightedness, farsightedness, or astigmatism before surgery was greater than what Navy standards allow, the applicant will still be disqualified even if the visual acuity results after surgery are very good. The reason for this is that the risks of other diseases of the eye associated with very high degrees of refractive error are not reduced as a result of having had refractive surgery. The refractive error before the PRK or LASIK procedure should have exceeded, for enlisted personnel, +/-8.00 diopters of sphere with no greater than 4.00 diopters of cylinder (astigmatism), and for officers, or those in programs leading to commissioning: +/-6.00 diopters of sphere with no greater than 3 diopters of cylinder. Again, visual outcome after the surgery must meet the vision standards, i.e. no worse than 20/40 acuity in the best eye, and, at least, 20/70 acuity in the other. Both eyes must be correctable to, at least, 20/20 acuity using regular lenses.

There is a required postoperative waiting period after surgical refractive treatment. As noted above, for PRK, a minimum of 3 months must elapse since the last treatment. For LASIK, a minimum of 6 months must elapse since the last treatment. All complications from the surgery must be resolved prior to entry or re-entry into service. Postoperative exams must document refractive stability, i.e., there is no greater than 0.5 diopter of spherical equivalent change over two exams given at least a month apart.

*NOTE: The typical waiting period for general Navy personnel to be scheduled for refractive eye surgery may be 1-3 years. Selected Special Warfare active duty personnel or BUDS/SWCC candidates may be added to the first priority list, reducing the wait time to 2-3 months.*

If the surgery was done outside of the Navy, those seeking a waiver should provide: (1) a copy of the surgical record that details the treatment(s), the PDA approved laser utilized and the FDA approved protocol (if in a clinical research trial) used for treatment; and (2) a copy of the postoperative exams that demonstrate resolution to any surgical complications and refractive stability.

Currently, those who enter BUD/S, at NAB Coronado, with LASDC, are seen by the Navy Refractive Surgery Center, Department of Ophthalmology, Naval Medical Center, San Diego, also for an eye exam prior to entrance into a training class.

If there are questions about eye surgery, the POC for Undersea/Diving/Special Warfare medical issues should be called in San Diego on the PRK phone line, Naval Medical Center San Diego -(619) 524-0555, DSN 524-0555. The final authoritative word comes from BUMED, i.e. MED-21, (202) 762-3449 or (DSN) 762-3449.

*NOTE: The best person to contact regarding refractive eye surgery as it relates to Naval Special Warfare is Mr. Sandor Kaupp. He works for the Navy Refractive Surgery Center in the Ophthalmology Department of the San Diego Naval Medical Center. His direct phone line is 619-524-6733*

\*Dr. Lockette's material has not been altered. All "NOTES" added in *italics* are not original material provided by Dr.Lockette. This information has been inserted postscript.