



Federal Aviation  
Administration

# MEDICAL CERTIFICATION

## QUESTIONS AND

## ANSWERS



### When There Are Questions About Your Medical Certification Qualifications *A checklist for speeding your medical certification decision*

**M**OST (more than 90%) medical certification applicants pass their physical examinations, and the Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) is able to issue a medical certificate at the time of the exam. Occasionally, however, a condition is found that requires a process of further review and, possibly, additional testing. The purpose of this brochure is to help answer some of the questions that you might have about this process.

#### What are my chances of ultimately being certified?

**W**HILE IT IS impossible to predict your individual likelihood of certification, our current process allows us ultimately to certify 96% of individuals whose medical qualifications are initially questioned. Sometimes this process requires a period of recovery from an illness, surgery, or other condition.

#### Why does it take so long to process my application and other reports?

**W**E RECEIVE an average of 1800 applications for medical certification each day. We are required to review each to assure that medical standards are met. When an application is found that may not meet the requirements, a letter is written to the applicant identifying the problem and outlining the further potential courses of action. We must then wait for a response from the applicant before we can proceed further. Each time new information is received, the application package must again be reviewed. Given the large number of applications being processed and the amount of time required to evaluate the information, it sometimes takes longer than we all would like.

#### What can I do to speed the process along?

**T**HERE are several steps you can take to assure that your application package is processed in the shortest time possible. Use this list of items like a checklist to speed the processing of your application.

- ✓ Don't hesitate to ask your AME for advice and assistance in gathering the requested information.
- ✓ When we ask for additional information, we ask for the least amount possible to make our decision. This means that we really do need everything that we request, so the first thing that you can do is to make sure that all the information that we have requested is being provided. Also, please understand, if we ask that a certain test be performed in a certain way, that is what we need. Be sure that you take all of our letters with you to your physician, and try to emphasize the importance of exactly fulfilling our requests.
- ✓ Have all of the requested information forwarded to us in one package.
- ✓ Do not hide important medical facts from us. This just delays things further. If you send us information about one medical problem and the hospital records indicate a second serious medical problem, which we did not previously know about, we will have to start a new investigation of the second problem.

- ✓ Give us an adequate amount of time to process your application. If you call or write to find out the status of your application, your file will have to be located and taken out of line to answer the inquiry. This will further delay its processing. On the other hand, if you haven't heard from us within 60 days, you may call us at the number listed below for an update.

### If my own physician thinks I'm okay to fly, why do you have a problem with me?

MOST physicians see their role as one of helping their patients by preventing medical problems when possible and treating medical problems if they do occur. This treatment may actually be a cure or it may be something that diminishes the impact of the medical condition on the person's daily life.

There are many conditions that can be cured, such as appendicitis, gall bladder disease, and pneumonia. There are other conditions that can be treated but are not cured, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes.

In the case of this latter group, when a physician has done all that is possible to control the disease, the patient may be told that participation in any activity, including flying, is okay. To the treating physician, this means that there is nothing more to be done for the disease, and that activity will not make the disease worse.

Unfortunately, the treating physician does not always realize that the medical condition **could make the activity worse** (by making it less safe due to the medical condition). In addition, many physicians only fly as passengers on commercial aircraft. They do not realize the potential problems inherent in piloting aircraft, which may require more from the pilot than his or her medical condition will allow.



### Medical Facts for Pilots

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### Other Pilot Safety Brochures Available

Number	Title
AM-400-94/2	Alcohol and Flying: A Deadly Combination
AM-400-95/2	Altitude Decompression Sickness
OK05-0270	Carbon Monoxide: A Deadly Threat
AM-400-03/2	Deep Vein Thrombosis and Travel
AM-400-98/3	Hearing and Noise in Aviation
AM-400-97/1	Introduction to Human Factors in Aviation
OK05-0005	Medications and Flying
AM-400-01/1	Physiological Training Courses for Civil Aviation Pilots
AM-400-98/2	Pilot Vision
AM-400-91/2	Seat Belts and Shoulder Harnesses
AM-400-95/1	Smoke!
AM-400-00/1	Spatial Disorientation: Visual Illusions
AM-400-03/1	Spatial Disorientation: Why You Shouldn't Fly By the Seat of Your Pants
AM-400-05/1	Sunglasses for Pilots: Beyond the Image

### Physiological Training Classes for Pilots

If you are interested in taking a one-day aviation physiological training course with altitude chamber and vertigo demonstrations or a one-day survival course, learn about how to sign up for these courses that are offered at 14 locations across the U.S. by visiting this FAA Web site:

[www.faa.gov/pilots/training/airman\\_education/aerospace\\_physiology/index.cfm](http://www.faa.gov/pilots/training/airman_education/aerospace_physiology/index.cfm)