

HOW TO GET A SMOOTH RIDE THROUGH YOUR NEXT PILOT EXAM

Most pilots like to think that going for their Flight Physical is just another annoyance, a routine appointment on your schedule to tick off. Some are surprised when they don't walk out the door with their medical certificate in hand. Over the last few years, I've noticed that there are some common things that recur to slow down this process which could be easily remedied with a little forethought. Here are a few things that may help expedite your next visit to obtain your medical certificate.

Don't drink coffee before the visit. Even folks with normal blood pressure can get pretty high on caffeine. The flight physical is a stressful event for many people regardless of whether they fly for a living or not. If you are one of those people whose blood pressure elevates just walking into a doctor's office, do yourself a favor and don't aggravate the situation. Get there with plenty of time (driving at breakneck speed, trying not to be late or driving in rush hour will not help you). Get enough sleep the night before. Don't eat a huge meal and/or drink alcohol the night before. There is not a medical reason for this but an observation of mine.

If you wear glasses or contacts, go for your yearly exam BEFORE your medical. It may save you a return trip if you need to see the bottom line. Along the same lines, bring your newest glasses with you for the vision test. This may seem obvious, but I've had people bring their "comfortable" glasses and tell me they have others at home. If you need reading glasses to read, bring them.

Get your paperwork in order. If you've had any doctor visits in the last 3 years you will need the name of the physician, the place of the visit and what it was for.

If you are on new medications (not reported on your last medical application), call the office to find out if you need a letter from your physician about them. Anything that changes will need to be documented. This is the government we are working with and they are not tree-friendly.

If paperwork makes you nervous, AOPA members can go to www.aopa.org and use **TurboMedical** to go through the application form and make sure you have what you need. Each item is explained well and references to FAR are linked to the appropriate item. This is a good resource. It is NOT however, a replacement for your flight physical application. You CAN print it out and bring it with you to your exam. Do not sign it until in the AME's presence.

If you have a letter from the FAA regarding a medical condition that needs periodic updates, bring it with you. It will tell you what you need for your next exam. If there is anything you need to do in advance, call the office before the visit so that we can try to have all the paperwork in order for the exam.

Anyone with serious medical questions or concerns can schedule a **practice exam**. This is an "off the record" visit where questions can be asked and answered without any reporting to the FAA. Many pilots have asked about what they need to qualify because they are unsure of whether to get an aviation physical for the medical certificate or elect to go for sport pilot which does not require an exam. While I cannot make the decision for anyone, I can do the physical in advance and will tell you if you meet the limitations for the class of certificate desired. **I cannot do this at the same time as a visit scheduled to obtain a pilot medical certificate.** Once a visit is scheduled for an FAA physical and the paperwork is started, the information will be sent to the FAA.

Lastly, realize that most Aviation Medical Examiners are trying to keep pilots flying. Many of us are pilots ourselves and understand that sitting in the left seat is important to you. Helping you through the paperwork jungle is what we do. Try to relax and it won't hurt a bit.

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