

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: What is the new FAA policy on mandatory color vision testing?

A: Effective January 1, 2025, the FAA made significant changes to color vision screening for new applicants at all class levels, the reasons for which the FAA stated to be the following:

- 1) Widespread proliferation of color displays.
- 2) FAA & NTSB concerns that current testing might be inadequate for the existing and future color-rich environment.
- 3) Lack of standardization in administration of current tests.
- 4) Incorrect or inadequate testing by some AMEs.
- 5) NTSB safety recommendation (for commercial pilots).
- 6) Advances in testing technology and completion of computerized test evaluations at CAMI (Civil Aerospace Medical Institute) enabled this change.

For pilots holding current **First**, **Second**, or **Third-Class** medical certificates who have previously passed color vision testing or have a SODA, will not require any additional color vision testing unless they develop a medical condition or begin taking any medication that could affect color vision. However, previous **Third-Class** pilots who wish to upgrade to a **First** or **Second-Class** will require FAA mandated color vision testing. If a pilot is unable to pass the acceptable color vision screening (CCVT) the AME will issue a **Third-Class** medical certificate with the following limitation “*Valid for day visual flight rules [VFR] only.*” See FAA website for their flowchart about the process: [FAA Color Vision Testing Flow Chart](#).

Q: I have always held a Third-Class FAA medical certificate. I would like to fly under the new rules for BasicMed. Do you perform exams under BasicMed?

A: The AME at FlightSurgeon does not perform exams under **BasicMed**, which falls under 14 CFR part 68. An AME performs exams under the authority of 14 CFR part 67. **BasicMed** is a process in which the airman's personal physician who knows their medical history may complete a Comprehensive Medical Exam Checklist (CMEC). The CMEC is, in essence, a modified FAA Form 8500-8. Some non-AME physicians are reluctant to complete this form due to their lack of familiarity with aviation related health and medical issues. It is the pilot's responsibility to understand the requirements of the new rules and also the physician completing the **BasicMed** CMEC must attest that they are familiar with FAA medical certification standards. Additional information is available at [the FAA's BasicMed Page](#).

Q: What is the difference between a First (I), Second (II), and Third (III) Class physical examination?

A: For applicants under the age of 40 at the time of the exam, a **First-Class** certificate is valid for one year and at age 40 or older the validity drops to six (6) months. **First-Class** pilots must have 20/20 vision in each eye separately and together with or without correction for distant

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vision, 20/40 intermediate vision (if over age 50), and 20/40 near visual acuity. **First-Class** pilots will need their first **ECG** at age 35, then annually over age 40. Applicants must also demonstrate adequate depth perception and pass a minimum conversational voice test and color vision. **See Note below*

Second-Class medical certificates are valid for one year(12 calendar months) regardless of the age of the applicant. **Second Class** applicants also need 20/20 visual acuity in each eye individually and together with or without correction for distant vision, 20/40 intermediate vision (if over age 50), and 20/40 near visual acuity. Applicants must also demonstrate adequate depth perception and pass a minimum conversational voice test and color vision test. **See Note below*

Third Class certificates for applicants under age 40 at the time of the exam, are valid for five years (60 calendar months) and at age 40 and older it is valid for two years (24 calendar months). **Third Class** applicants must demonstrate at least 20/40 vision in each eye as well as both eyes with (or without) correction for distant and near vision. Applicants must also pass a minimum conversational voice test and color vision test. **See Note below*

****Note that the color vision test (CCVT) is only required the first time an applicant applies to the FAA for a medical certificate. Once passed, it is not required for subsequent FAA exams, with some exceptions.***

For all classes at FlightSurgeon.com, applicants receive a professional vision screening.

Q: How much does an FAA medical examination cost and how may I pay?

A: The fees for initial FAA medical certification examinations (**which does not include the FAA mandated Waggoner CCVT - Computerized Color Vision Testing**) depends on whether the applicant is a first-time applicant or a returning pilot, as well as the class of certificate applied for: i.e., **First, Second, or Third-Class** airmen medical examinations. Please see the Fee Schedule on the website at: FlightSurgeon.com If an **EKG** (ECG) is required it will be performed and submitted electronically to the FAA for an additional fee of \$100. There are additional fees for **AASI (AME Assisted Special Issuance)**, **CACI (Conditions AME's Can Issue)** review and issuance of an interim certificate is \$140. Additional work required for a Special Issuance will be invoiced at an hourly rate which is \$500/hour. We accept cash, and most credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express. **PERSONAL CHECKS ARE NOT ACCEPTED.**

Q: Does medical insurance cover my FAA examination?

A: FAA examinations are requested by a third party (FAA) and are not usually covered by most medical/health insurance plans. However, pilots have been able to have them covered using a Health Savings Account (HSA) for payment with either a credit or debit card.

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Q: I need a CDL medical exam or camp physical form completed. Can that be done at the time of my appointment?

A: Yes, The AME at FlightSurgeon is authorized to perform CDL medical exams for the FMCA, as well as Coast Guard and WA Board of Pilots exams or other physical exams required for sports physicals, racing physicals, etc.

Q: Should my AME also be my personal physician?

A: Unfortunately, this would not apply to the AME at FlightSurgeon.com since the practice is limited to FAA medical, CDL and Coast Guard or other physical examinations. The Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) is an FAA designee and is authorized by the FAA to determine if a medical certificate can be granted for aviation duties. The FAA does have the ultimate authority to determine whether or not the applicant is qualified to hold a Medical Certificate issued by the AME. Therefore, no doctor-patient relationship exists and the AME is not serving in the capacity of a personal physician. There is no duty of confidentiality and any information about the applicant must be disclosed to the FAA.

Q: I lost my medical certificate. How can I get a replacement?

A: AME's are not authorized to make copies of medical certificates. Pilots should contact the FAA and request a duplicate medical certificate. In the [Pilots Request a Copy](#) page on the FAA website there is a copy of form [AC Form 8060-56](#) and the mailing address to send it to. Remember to include \$2.00. The mailing address is:

**Federal Aviation Administration
Aerospace Medical Certification Division, AAM-331
Attn: Duplicate Desk
Post Office Box 25082
Oklahoma City, OK 73125**

Q: How should I prepare for an FAA medical examination?

A: The FAA Medical itself is an uncomplicated physical exam that's meant to assess a pilot's health history and overall fitness for flight. Most people who are in reasonably good health will have no problem passing an FAA Medical, provided that they do not have any disqualifying condition many of which affect the heart and nervous system, as well as issues of mental stability and substance abuse. Anyone concerned about failing the flight physical because of a known health problem should contact an examiner before scheduling an appointment. Obtaining required tests or consultations in advance of the flight physical can save considerable time. If you routinely or frequently take a medication, the AME needs to know the name (Brand name or

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generic name), the dosage, and how it is taken. The FAA will not approve the use of any medication which affects mental status. The AME also needs to know the name, address and dates of all physician visits within the past 3 years, though multiple visits to one physician require only a single entry with the explanation of what the consultations were about. You do not need to bring your pilot logbook to your exam. Estimates of total flying time are acceptable. All of this information will be required when you complete the FAA Form 8500-8 on the MedXpress (MedXPress.faa.gov) application online. Once you submit the application you will receive a **CONFIRMATION NUMBER**, which is also printed on the form. The AME has to have the **CONFIRMATION NUMBER** in order to import your information and be able to review the it at the time of your examination. Make sure you have the **CONFIRMATION NUMBER BEFORE ARRIVING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT**. The AME cannot proceed or even issue a medical certificate without it.

Q: What is included in my physical examination?

A: The physical examination consists of height and weight measurements, blood pressure and heart rate measurements, a CCVT (**C**omputerized **C**olor **V**ision **T**est), **if this is your first FAA application**, vision screening utilizing a sophisticated screening device, urine testing (glucose and protein), and **EKG (ECG)** if required for **First-class** examinees (**at age 35 and annually after age 40**). If you have previously passed one of the color vision tests, you will **NOT** need to take the CCVT. The physical exam portion does not require or include examination of the breasts, genitalia, or rectum, though the doctor does have to visually inspect your head, face, ears, oral cavity, abdomen and back and extremities as well as listen to your heart, lungs and abdomen which means working in close proximity of a female's breasts, . Contact lenses do not need to be removed. A typical exam is a stress-free experience and takes no more than 30 to 60 minutes depending on medical issues that need clarification, etc.

Q: What are the disqualifying medical conditions?

A: The following medical conditions are specifically disqualifying under 14 CFR part 67. However, the FAA may exercise discretionary authority under the provisions of **Authorization of Special Issuance**, to issue an airman medical certificate, which usually implies a specific time limitation which depends on the condition and its propensity to change over time. Unless otherwise directed by the FAA, the Examiner must deny or defer if the applicant has a history of:

- 1) Diabetes mellitus requiring hypoglycemic medication;**
- 2) Angina pectoris;**
- 3) Coronary heart disease that has been treated or, if untreated, that has been symptomatic or clinically significant;**
- 4) Myocardial infarction;**

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- 5) *Cardiac valve replacement;*
- 6) *Permanent cardiac pacemaker;*
- 7) *Heart replacement;*
- 8) *Psychosis;*
- 9) *Bipolar disorder;*
- 10) *Personality disorder that is severe enough to have repeatedly manifested itself by overt acts;*
- 11) *Substance dependence;*
- 12) *Substance abuse;*
- 13) *Epilepsy;*
- 14) *Disturbance of consciousness and without satisfactory explanation of cause, and*
- 15) *Transient loss of control of nervous system function(s) without satisfactory explanation of cause.*

Q: Because of a medical condition I am worried that I might not be able to pass an FAA medical examination. I understand I can fly an airplane under the Sport Pilot Rule. Should I apply for a Third-Class medical certificate, or should I go the Sport Pilot Route?

A: You should discuss this with your AME, but it may be in your best interest to not apply for a medical certificate as a denial will prevent you from flying under Sport Pilot category unless you pursue getting certified under Special Issuance. Although the FAA requires only a valid driver's license as proof of medical suitability for the Sport Pilot category, it does exclude individuals who have had a previous denial of their medical certificate. This appears to be a contradictory policy or a double standard in that allowing a pilot with a known medical condition that is a risk to flight safety should not be allowed to fly under the Sport Pilot Rule just because they hold a driver's license. Additionally, many aircraft owners' insurance or renters' insurance policies require any pilot flying an aircraft insured under their policy to hold a standard FAA medical certificate.

Q: What is Special Issuance?

A: *Special Issuance* is a category of medical certification for pilots with certain medical conditions which are stable, but may change over time, and the FAA has previously determined they are qualified or if a new medical condition has developed which may be temporarily disqualifying the applicant may apply for a special issuance. The Medical Certificate granted for Special Issuance category is generally a time-limited certificate (usually one year) and requires careful monitoring of the medical condition requiring periodic (usually annual) status reports from the treating physician to be forwarded to the FAA before a new medical certificate can be issued. When a pilot receives a Special Issuance, they will receive an Authorization Letter which

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describes requirements that pilots must meet prior to the next required examination. Most often these Authorization Letters are valid for 6 years during which the AME is authorized to issue the certificate if all the conditions stated in the Authorization Letter are met. It is imperative that the applicant follow the directions in the Authorization Letter explicitly and bring the required records and Authorization Letters to the office for all follow-up examinations. If required medical documentation is missing it may lead to a delay in processing their medical certification.

Q: What is a SODA?

A: A **SODA** (**S**tatement **O**f **D**emonstrated **A**bility) is a determination that a pilot can fly safely with a fixed physical deficiency, such as the loss of an eye or a limb. The pilot must demonstrate to an FAA pilot examiner that he or she can safely fly with any handicap and there have been no changes since the determination was first issued. Restrictions may be applied, an example being the use of hand controls or use of a prosthetic limb. Any pilot who already has been issued a SODA and is coming for a medical examination should always bring a copy of the SODA with him or her to the office.

Q: What are medical conditions that the AME can issue?

A: These referred to as **CACI** Conditions (**C**onditions **A**ME's **C**an **I**ssue) by the FAA. These are conditions that are mostly stable over time and are not deemed to be disqualifying, so they do not require a Special Issuance Authorization. They are relatively common and mild enough that Medical Certificates may be issued by the AME as long as the current medical status report from the treating physician documents stability according to the FAA specifications. These conditions are listed in the FAA website and each of the 26 conditions has a "CACI Worksheet" that details what is required for the AME to issue the Medical Certificate. You can print these worksheets and take them to your physician to see if you meet the stipulations listed. Note that the FAA is always adding conditions to this list, many of which are downgraded from the AASI conditions, so this list will likely grow over time. (See below for links to the [CACI Worksheets page.](#))

Some require "pre-approval" under an initial Special Issuance, others do not. The important thing is that the AME can issue the certificate **as long as the medical reports are complete and fulfill the FAA's requirements.** Some previous Special Issuance conditions are now in this category (see below) making things much easier. Furthermore, these conditions do not carry any shortened expiration dates. Here is the list of the currently approved conditions:

- 1) *Arthritis*
- 2) *Asthma*
- 3) *Bladder Cancer*

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- 4) *Breast Cancer*
- 5) *C-ITP (Chronic Immune Thrombocytopenia)*
- 6) *Chronic Kidney Disease*
- 7) *CLL (Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia)*
- 8) *Colitis*
- 9) *Colon Cancer*
- 10) *Essential Tremor*
- 11) *Glaucoma*
- 12) *Hepatitis C - Chronic*
- 13) *Hypertension*
- 14) *Hypothyroidism*
- 15) *Low Testosterone (Low T), Hypogonadism*
- 16) *Migraine and Chronic Headache*
- 17) *Mitral Valve Repair*
- 18) *Polycystic Ovarian syndrome*
- 19) *Pre-Diabetes*
- 20) *Primary Hemochromatosis*
- 21) *Prostate Cancer*
- 22) *Psoriasis*
- 23) *Renal Cancer*
- 24) *Retained Kidney Stones*
- 25) *Testicular Cancer*
- 26) *Weight Loss Management*

The following link to the CACI Conditions has all the CACI Worksheets, each of which available to download at the following link: https://www.faa.gov/ame_guide/certification_ws

Q: Is there an approved medication list published by the FAA?

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A: The FAA has recently posted a helpful guide to pharmaceuticals in the AME Guide. Click the following link learn more: [AME Guide – Pharmaceutical Guidelines](#).

Q: How does the FAA handle DUI's or other legal problems?

A: The FAA takes any form of substance abuse or dependence very seriously. The FAA computers access national databases containing anything of public record and such facts cannot be hidden. If a pilot is arrested for a DUI, he or she must report this to the security division of the FAA within 60 days of a conviction. Any arrest (even without conviction) must also be reported on the next flight physical application. The AME is then required to assess whether the pilot might have a problem with alcohol or recurring legal issues. This includes obtaining the arrest and court records from the jurisdiction where the infraction occurred. If this is an isolated incident the AME may be able to issue the medical certificate if evidence supports this unless the following is true:

- Blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.15 or higher
- History of two DUI arrests within 10 years
- Lifetime history of three or more DUI arrests

If any of the above three criteria are met, the FAA will require the applicant to undergo a professional Substance Abuse Evaluation by an SAP (Substance Abuse Professional) before further consideration can be undertaken. If you have a problem in this area, please discuss with the AME about the prospects for FAA consideration.

Failing to report any of these legal issues when completing the FAA Form 8500-8 online carries substantial legal risk and will likely result in significant delays in obtaining an FAA Medical Certificate. Keep in mind that submitting this form to the FAA involves electronically attesting to the veracity, accuracy and truth of the information you submitted on the form and failure to report any incident can result in 5 years in prison and \$250,000 in fines.

Q: Can I fly if I have been previously diagnosed with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder)?

A: If this diagnosis occurred during childhood and the applicant no longer takes medication and no longer has current evidence of Attention Deficit Disorder, then the answer may be “yes”, with documentation and a thorough explanation by the applicant’s treating physician, as long as ADD medications have not been used for a long time. However, if the diagnosis is ongoing, the applicant will need to be off all ADD medications and undergo a rigorous cognitive evaluation by a board-certified clinical neuropsychologist. The applicant should consult with an AME before undergoing such testing to make sure it follows the FAA standards.

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Q: What is the new FAA policy concerning diagnosis and treatment of depression?

A: A new policy for "situational depression" was released in May 2022 which states that any AME can issue as long as certain conditions are met. The AME should gather information regarding the diagnosis, severity, treatment, symptoms, and address ALL questions on the Situational Depression Decision Tool for the AME. If 5 or more years ago, treatment was not more than 6 months from the resolution of the stressor; there is no history of self-harm, psychiatric hospitalization, or persisting symptoms, the FAA will accept the AME history and the AME is authorized to issue a medical certificate. If the single episode was LESS than 5 years ago, the AME must review a current, detailed Clinical Progress Note and actual clinical records from the treating physician to verify the diagnosis before issuing the medical certificate.

The policy regarding medical certification of airmen with a history of depression treated with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) anti-depressant medications went into effect on April 5, 2010. Applicants will be followed by HIMS (Human Intervention Motivation Study) trained AME's (Aviation Medical Examiners) who are familiar with the initial evaluation and monitoring process that will be utilized for the SSRIs because the new policy is modeled on the process used for airmen with substance abuse and dependence diagnoses. They also have training and experience in evaluating airmen from a psychological perspective.

The FAA Office of Aerospace Medicine will consider Special Issuance medical certification for airmen who are being treated for mild to moderate depressive disorders, such as major depressive disorder (mild to moderate), either single episode or recurrent episode; dysthymic disorder; and adjustment disorder with depressed mood. Also, the following single agent medications may be utilized: Fluoxetine (**Prozac**[®]), Sertraline (**Zoloft**[®]), Citalopram (**Celexa**[®]), Escitalopram (**Lexapro**[®]), and Bupropion (**Wellbutrin**[®]) has recently been added at certain dosages. The following are specifically unacceptable diagnoses and or symptoms: psychosis, suicidal ideation, history of electro convulsive therapy (ECT), treatment with multiple antidepressant medications concurrently, and a history of multiage drug protocol use (prior use of other psychiatric drugs in conjunction with antidepressant medications).

To be certified the applicant must demonstrate the following status: All symptoms of the psychiatric condition for which treatment is indicated must be ameliorated by the single medication, and the condition must be stable with no change in or exacerbation of symptoms for 12 months prior to certification; airman must be on a stable dosage of medication for a minimum of 6 months prior to certification; airman must have no aeromedically significant side effects of prescribed medication(s).

The following are required reports and consultations for initial consideration:

- 1) Current status report from treating psychiatrist attesting to diagnosis, length of treatment, and presence of any side effects.

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- 2) Written statement from airman regarding his/her status.
- 3) If the applicant is a pilot flying commercially for an airline or air charter company, a letter from airline management (Chief pilot or designee) attesting to pilot's observed mood on medication, if previously not flying, and in pilot's admitting previous non-disclosure, a report on prior competence, crew interaction, and mood while on medication (only for **First** and **Second-Class** medical certificate holders flying under FAR Parts 121 or 135).
- 4) Report of results of neurocognitive psychological tests and provision of raw test data: include but not be limited to — COGSCREEN AE, Trails A/B; Stroop Test; CCPT, PASAT, Wisconsin Card Sorting Test.
- 5) Evaluation and written report from HIMS-trained AME as to current psychiatric status of airman, treatment, and recommendation for Special Issuance certificate.

Process for Special Issuance certification:

- 1) Records package sent through Aerospace Medical Certification Division (AMCD) in Oklahoma City, Okla. to AAM-200 (Washington, D.C.) for review of first-time application and approval for Special Issuance of 6 month or 12-month time-limited medical certificate, depending on age of applicant (reviewed by Chief Psychiatrist) for **First-Class** medical certificates and pilots flying under FAR Parts 121 or 135, 12-month time-limited medical Certificate (reviewed by Chief Psychiatrist) for **Second** and **Third-Class** medical certificates.
- 2) Subsequent Special Issuance medical certificate will be issued directly by HIMS trained AME if all required documentation is considered acceptable or deferred to AAM-200, Chief FAA Psychiatrist, if there are concerns.
- 3) FAA Form 8500-8 will be transmitted to the AMCD, and follow-up report with recommendation from the HIMS-trained AME will also be forwarded to the AMCD (as per the current HIMS model for substance dependence Special Issuance).

Follow-up evaluation requirements (all classes of medical certificate) include forwarding the following materials to the HIMS trained AME:

- 1) Current status report from treating physician at the time of application for Special Issuance medical certificate.
- 2) Psychiatric consultation status report every 6 months for all classes of medical certificate holders.

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- 3) Letter from airline management (if employed as a pilot) every 3 months for **First** and **Second-Class** medical certificate holders flying under FAR Parts 121 or 135, forwarded to the HIMS AME.
- 4) After initial Special Issuance Authorization, psychometric testing may be required; annually for **First** and **Second** class medical certificate holders flying under FAR Parts 121 or 135; and every two years for **Third-Class** medical certificate holders.

Q: I received a letter requiring me to contact a HIMS AME. What does that entail?

A: It depends on the situation, whether it's for alcohol, drug, or mental health issues. The letter usually specifies some of the requirements to obtain a Special Issuance. HIMS engagement is a complicated issue and it would be better to contact the AME through the Airport Office (360) 568-1541, #3.