

The Sky's the Limit

Timeline of Advocacy on Behalf of Pilots with Insulin-Treated Diabetes

1959

Regulation is passed that bans all people who use insulin from becoming pilots.



1996

In response to American Diabetes Association® (ADA) advocacy, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) begins allowing insulin-treated (ITDM) pilots to fly privately. To date, approximately 500 pilots have been certified and no pilot has had an accident or incident relating to their diabetes.

2011

ADA asks the FAA to adopt a policy that allows pilots with ITDM to fly commercially.



2012–2013

ADA obtains the support of airlines, pilot unions, and membership organizations and continues educating FAA on the advancements in diabetes care and management.



2014

ADA volunteers Daniel Lorber, MD, FACP, CDE; Desmond Schatz, MD; Samuel Dagogo-Jack, MD; Elizabeth Seaquist, MD; and Martin Abrahamson, MD, FACP, serve on an expert panel to advise the FAA on how to identify pilots with ITDM who can successfully avoid hypoglycemia in flight.



2015

The FAA indicates on its website that it will consider applications by pilots on “a case-by-case basis.”



2016–2019

Pilots Eric Friedman and Mitchell Mitchell file lawsuits challenging the FAA's inaction on their applications. The ADA files friend-of-the-court briefs in support of these pilots to educate the court regarding the current state of diabetes treatment and medicine.



November 2019

The FAA publishes a final protocol for assessing pilots with insulin-treated diabetes for commercial flight privileges in the Federal Register.

