



Frequently Asked Questions Changes for Commercial Pilots with Insulin-Treated Diabetes

What does it mean that there's a new protocol for pilots with insulin-treated diabetes?

On November 7, 2019, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) published in the Federal Register a [notice](#) announcing that it is ready to consider applications by insulin-treated pilots seeking to fly commercially. The FAA has stated on its website since 2015 that it will give consideration to pilots on a “case by case basis” but has not granted any certificates in that time. FAA’s announcement includes a [protocol](#) for evaluating the applications of pilots. This announcement came following a decade of ADA advocacy aimed at convincing the FAA that it is possible to identify pilots who can safely fly in the commercial space.

Why is the announcement important?

The announcement is important because for the first time ever, a career in commercial piloting will be open to people with insulin-treated diabetes. Since 1959, insulin-treated pilots have been barred from obtaining the types of medical certificate required to fly commercially.

When does the new protocol go into effect?

Pilots interested in obtaining the first or second-class medical certificate required for commercial operations may work with their Aerospace Medical Examiner to apply through the MedXpress system immediately.

Who does the new protocol apply to?

The new protocol applies to any individual with insulin-treated diabetes who would like to obtain a first or second-class medical certificate, required for commercial flight privileges.

What information must be submitted with an application?

Comprehensive information concerning the types of medical records and data that must be submitted is located [here](#), but in summary, pilots must submit (1) An initial comprehensive report from the treating, board-certified endocrinologist (2) Initial comprehensive laboratory panel (3) Finger-Stick Blood Sugar (FSBS) glucose monitoring data (4) Continuous Glucose Monitoring (CGM) data for at least the preceding 6-month period (using a device legally marketed in the United States in accordance with Food and Drug Administration requirements and containing protocol-specific features needed for appropriate in-flight monitoring.) (5) Excel spreadsheet or similar that identifies CGM data for all flights for the past 6 months and any actions

taken to address low or high glucose levels. (6) Eye evaluation (from a board-certified ophthalmologist) (7) Cardiac risk evaluation (from a board-certified cardiologist).

Will there be any limits or restrictions on the medical certificate granted by Aerospace Medicine?

The Federal Register notice explains that the FAA will not impose operational limitations on medical certificates. Other countries, like Canada and the U.K., employ multi-crew restrictions or require the pilot with diabetes to notify their co-pilot of their diabetes, but the FAA explained that its protocol focuses on identifying pilots that can fly safely just by using a continuous glucose monitor (CGM). The FAA will restrict pilots from operating outside the United States.

What are the new medical criteria?

Applicants will need to demonstrate stability and adequate control of ITDM using CGM technology for a minimum of 6 months. The FAA asks that pilots submit CGM data indicating the percentage of time spent with blood sugar outside the range of 70 mg/dL to 250 mg/dL.

Where can I find more information about the new rule?

You can access a copy of the announcement by visiting:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/11/07/2019-24150/special-issuance-medical-certification-diabetes-protocol-for-applicants-seeking-to-exercise-airline>

You can find guidance for how to submit an application and what specific information must be included here:

https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/avs/offices/aam/ame/guide/d/ec_cons/disease_prot/itdm/

Read the ADA's statement about the new rule by visiting:

<https://www.diabetes.org/newsroom>

How do I get help with my commercial pilot's license?

If you are facing discrimination because of your diabetes, related to a commercial pilot's license or to any other aspect of employment, at school, in detention or in other aspects of your daily life, contact the ADA at 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383) or

AskADA@diabetes.org to get help.

Need help with a discrimination issue? Have questions about your legal rights? The ADA can help. If your issue is within our areas of service, you will receive tailored legal information and guidance from our attorneys. Although our attorneys cannot represent you, they can help you understand your rights and give you practical tools to solve your problem. If needed, they may be able to help you find a local attorney.