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What are the differences in the types of pilot licenses (certificates)?

A **student pilot** license (certificate) is designed for the initial training period of flying. The student pilot must have a flight instructor present. He or she can solo after appropriate instructor endorsements.

A **recreational pilot** certificate limits the holder to: specific categories and classes of aircraft, the number of passengers which may be carried, the distance that may be flown from the departure point, flight into controlled airports, and other limitations.

A **private pilot** certificate lets the pilot carry passengers and provides for limited business use of an airplane.

A **commercial pilot** certificate lets the pilot conduct some operations for compensation and hire.

An **airline transport pilot** certificate is required to fly as captain by some air transport operations.

What is a medical certificate?

Under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) Part 1, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) defines a medical certificate as "acceptable evidence of physical fitness on a form prescribed by the Administrator." The primary goal of the airman medical certification program is to protect not only those who would exercise the privileges of a pilot certificate but also air travelers and the general public.

A person who meets FAA airmen medical standards, based on a medical examination and an evaluation of medical history, is entitled to a medical certificate without restriction or limitation other than the prescribed limitation as to its duration. Individuals required to hold a medical certificate must have it in their personal possession at all times when exercising the privileges for which they are licensed.

Can I get my student pilot certificate at the same time I take my initial flight physical?

Yes. Aviation Medical Examiners (AMEs) are authorized to issue combination Airman Medical and Student Pilot certificates to appropriate applicants. To obtain this combination certificate, the applicant must meet the medical standards, be at least 16 years old, and be able to read, speak, and understand the English language.

Important Note: The combined medical / student pilot certificate will not be valid for flight duties until properly endorsed by the student's instructor.

How can I contact the FAA about my medical?

You can call or write:

Aerospace Medical Certification Division, AAM-300
Federal Aviation Administration
Civil Aerospace Medical Institute
P.O. Box 25082
Oklahoma City, OK 73125
(405) 954-4821

How do I obtain a medical certificate?

An FAA-designated Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) must examine you. You must contact an AME of your choosing, schedule an appointment, complete an official FAA application form, and undergo physical examination. If you meet the appropriate medical standards, the AME will issue you a medical certificate.

[Click here for a searchable listing of Aviation Medical Examiners.](#)

How does the appeal process work?

In our letters denying airmen medical certification, we inform applicants that they have the right to appeal. An applicant whose medical certification is denied by an AME may request reconsideration of the decision by the Manager, FAA Aerospace Medical Certification Division (AMCD) or an FAA Regional Flight Surgeon (RFS). If the AME simply defers issuance of a certificate, the AMCD or the RFS, as appropriate, automatically will review the application and inform the applicant of the decision.

If the AMCD or the RFS deny an applicant based on a medical condition that is specifically disqualifying as set forth under Part 67, the denial is final and may be appealed to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). If the AMCD or the RFS deny an applicant based on a medical condition that is not specifically disqualifying then the applicant may appeal to the Federal Air Surgeon (FAS). An unfavorable decision by the FAS may be appealed to the NTSB.

As appropriate, an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) will schedule and conduct a hearing on the question of the applicant's eligibility for certification. If the ALJ's decision is unacceptable to the applicant or the FAA, the matter may be appealed to the full board. If the full board affirms the denial of certification, the applicant may seek review by a U.S. Court of Appeals. From an adverse decision by a Court of Appeals, the applicant may ask for review by the U.S. Supreme Court.

[Aviation Medical Examiners \(AMEs\)](#): There are approximately 5000 physicians around the globe who are FAA-designated AMEs. AMEs are authorized to receive applications, to perform physical examinations and to issue airman medical certificates.

FAA, Aerospace Medical Certification Division

Aerospace Medical Certification Division, AAM-300
Federal Aviation Administration
Civil Aerospace Medical Institute
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Oklahoma City, OK 73125
(405) 954-4821

FAA, [Guide for Aviation Medical Examiners](#)

FAA, [Regional Flight Surgeons](#).

Pilot organizations: Two of the largest pilot organizations are the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) at (800) 236-4800 and the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) at (800) 872-2672.

What class of medical certificate must I hold and how long is it valid?

A first-class airman medical certificate is required to exercise the privileges of an airline transport pilot certificate. A first-class airman medical certificate is valid for 6 months plus the remainder of the days in the month of examination.

A second-class airman medical certificate is required for commercial, non-airline duties (e.g., for crop dusters, corporate pilots) and is valid for 1 year plus the remainder of the days in the month of examination. Those exercising the privileges of a flight engineer certificate, a flight navigator certificate, or acting as air traffic control tower operator must hold a second-class airman medical certificate.

A third-class airman medical certificate is required to exercise the privileges of a private pilot certificate, recreational pilot certificate, a flight instructor certificate, or a student pilot certificate. A third-class airman medical certificate is valid for 3 years plus the remainder of the days in the month of examination for pilots under age 40 or for 2 years plus the remainder of the days in the month of examination for those pilots age 40 and over.

What does it cost to get a medical certificate?

The FAA does not set fees for the performance of the medical exam and issuance of the medical certificate. Aviation Medical Examiners are allowed to charge the applicant appropriately, as long as it is not more than the usual fee for similar examinations for other purposes. If you are concerned about the cost of the exam, please discuss this with the doctor you are thinking about seeing. The FAA has no additional fees above what the physician charges.

<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov>

Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (e-CFR)

BETA TEST SITE

TITLE 14--Aeronautics and Space

CHAPTER I--FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION