

# Fit to Fly Rules for Pilots Explained



Reading time:  
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The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has cut red tape to permit GPs to certify pilots as 'fit to fly' for light aircraft under certain conditions. Under the new system, pilots will be able to receive their certification from GPs who will perform their assessment using the Austroads commercial vehicle driver standards.

This new system doesn't apply to pilots flying large commercial airlines, such as a Boeing 747 full of passengers, rather it only applies to pilots flying:

- piston engine aircraft
- carrying up to five non-fare paying passengers
- daytime flights only

CASA have labelled this new certification as a 'basic Class 2 medical' and once provided by a GP to a pilot will be valid for a maximum of five years up to the age of 40 and a maximum of two years above the age of 40.

All GPs will be able to provide the certification in contrast to previous practice. Previously, doctors who certified medical fitness for pilots were required to be appointed as a Designated Aviation Medical Examiner (DAME) by CASA. DAMEs are only appointed after completing either a two-week civilian course or a four-week military course.

While DAMEs continue to be the doctors providing most of the certification, the newer 'basic class 2 medical' may be performed by GPs.

Aerospace (or aviation or flight medicine) is a specialised area that requires knowledge of how factors such as changes in temperature, pressure and humidity declination, exposure to G-forces, fatigue and other factors affect pilots. GPs certifying pilots should familiarise themselves with medications and conditions that are likely to be affected by flying. Any GPs that are unsure if they should certify a patient as 'fit to fly' because of a condition, should refer their patients to a DAME.

The **Assessing fitness to drive** standards applied are the same commercial vehicle medical standards applied by Austroads to drivers of heavy vehicles, public passenger vehicles and vehicles carrying bulk dangerous goods. The medical standards can be downloaded online and concern:

- Blackouts
- Cardiovascular conditions
- Diabetes mellitus
- Hearing loss and deafness
- Musculoskeletal conditions
- Neurological conditions (eg Dementia, seizures and epilepsy)
- Psychiatric conditions
- Sleep disorders
- Substance misuse (including alcohol, illicit drugs and prescription drug misuse)
- Vision and eye disorders

CASA have advised the new standards will be introduced progressively in 2018.

## More information

Australian Society for Aerospace Medicine: <https://www.casa.gov.au/licences-and-certification/aviation-medicine>

Austroads: <https://austroads.com.au/drivers-and-vehicles/assessing-fitness-to-drive>

Should members have any queries related to these issues they are advised to contact MIPS for advice on 1800 061 113.

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