



# Interagency Aviation Accident Prevention Bulletin



No. APB 10-02

December 30, 2009

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**Subject:** Medications, Flying, and Fitness

**Area of Concern:** All Aviation Activities

**Distribution:** All Aviation Users

**Discussion:** It never fails. You've waited all month to go flying and you wake up with a sore throat and sniffles. Do you think to yourself: Well, I can still clear my ears so I'll just pop a couple of cold tablets and go flying.

Or, do you realize that pilot performance can be seriously affected by both prescribed and over-the-counter (OTC) medications and stay on the ground?

OTC medications are legal, non-prescription substances taken for the relief of discomforting symptoms. They come in capsule, tablet, powder, or liquid form. They also include topical agents that use a dermal delivery system (i.e. patch). Some of the more common OTC medications include:

- Analgesics: Non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID) such as Ibuprofen, aspirin, and acetaminophen. (Motrin, Bayer, Tylenol)
- Cold and flu preparations: antihistamines, decongestants, and cough preparations. (Alka-Seltzer Cold Plus, Sudafed)
- Allergy preparations: antihistamines, decongestants. (Claritin D)
- Bowel or gastrointestinal agents such as laxatives and anti-diarrhea. (Ex-Lax)
- Sleeping aids which generally have a low dose of antihistamines in them. (Tylenol PM, Sominex)
- Dietary supplements, including agents such as amino acids, vitamins, herbal and mineral/vitamin combinations.



## CAUTION

***"The CFRs prohibit a pilot who possesses a current medical certificate from performing crewmember duties while the pilot has a known medical condition or increase of a known medical condition that would make the pilot unable to meet the standards for the medical certificate." FAA Aeronautical Information Manual (8-1-1.c2)***

**Subject: Medications & Flying**

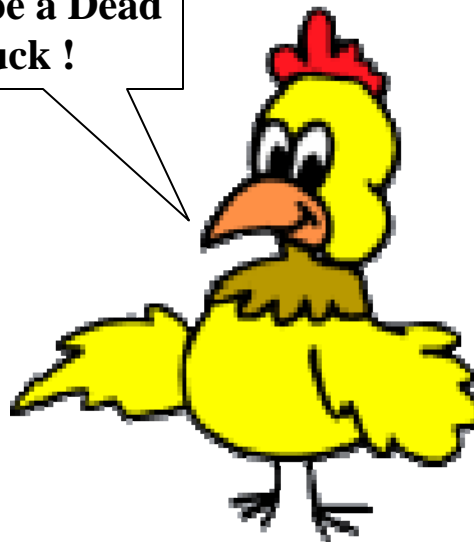
The FAA recommends the following:

- READ and follow label directions for use of **all** medications.
- If the label warns of side effects, do **NOT** fly until twice the recommended dosing interval has passed. For example, if the label says “take every 4-6 hours” then wait at least 12 hours!
- Remember, the condition you are treating may be as disqualifying as the medication itself.
- When in doubt, ask your physician or Aviation Medical Examiner.
- As a pilot, you are responsible for your own personal “pre-flight.” Be wary of any illness that requires medicine to make you feel better.
- If an illness is serious enough to require medication, it is also serious enough to prevent you from flying.
- Do not fly if you have a cold; changes in atmospheric pressures with changes in altitude can cause serious ear and sinus problems.
- Avoid mixing decongestants and caffeine.
- Beware of medications that use alcohol as a base for the ingredients.

REMEMBER. If in doubt, err on the side of caution! An old quote from the past is still applicable today:

**“Tis better to be a live chicken than a dead duck!”**

**Don't be a Dead Duck !**



**Subject: Medications & Flying**

**FITNESS FOR FLIGHT** - How fit are you for flying? Before you go fly, ask yourself the following question: Am I ready to go fly? By using the **I'M SAFE** checklist, you can answer that question.

## **I'M SAFE CHECKLIST**

**I**llness—Do I have any symptoms?

**M**edication—Have I been taking prescription or over-the-counter drugs?

**S**tress—Am I under psychological pressure from the job? Worried about financial matters, health matters, or family discord?

**A**lcohol—Have I been drinking within 12 hours? Within 24 hours?

**F**atigue—Am I tired and not adequately rested?

**E**ating—Am I adequately nourished?

The I'M SAFE Checklist can be just the thing to keep you alive. USE IT !!

/s/ John Mills

John Mills

Aviation Safety Manager (Acting)

/s/ Ron Hanks

Ron Hanks

Chief, Aviation Risk Management  
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