

# Prepare to pass

Dr Chris King looks at how to prepare for your medical and what your AME is looking for.

 It is important that you look and feel fit and well when you attend for your medical. The following tips should help you to arrive in optimum condition:

**1. Ideally attend not fatigued or jet-lagged, this can affect vision and also the ECG.**

2. Avoid excess alcohol and coffee before the medical. Excess alcohol could be detected on the breath. Remember the ANO allows AMEs to undertake any test or examination they see fit to establish fitness.

**3. Avoid excessive exercise and sexual activity for 48 hours before the medical as this could cause blood in the urine. Try to produce a mid-stream specimen at your medical, the initial and end part of the sample could be contaminated.**

4. Avoid over-the-counter medications (e.g. decongestants), Red Bull and coffee etc. These could affect the ECG.

**5. Attend having had little to eat; a large meal could cause elevated blood sugar, which could cause sugar in the urine and affect the 'T' waves on the ECG. Being hungry normalises the 'T' and reduces the risk of sugar in the urine.**

When attending for your medical, make sure you tick all the boxes on the application form Med 160 and fill in details of any medical problems that have occurred over the previous 12 months.

## Medical examination

1. Height and weight can give us your body mass index. Too high/obesity – there is an increased risk of diabetes and heart disease. There could also be problems with evacuation of an aircraft, plus pressure on flimsy seats with heavy landings. Too low may indicate anorexia.

**2. Pulse and blood pressure: Irregular or very slow pulses could indicate a problem with the conduction system of the heart. With high blood pressure there is an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.**

3. ECG: I shall deal with this in more detail in a future article but, basically, we are looking at the health of the heart muscle and the rhythm of the heart, and at the electrical conduction system.

**4. We listen to the heart to make sure there are no untoward sounds (murmurs) which could indicate a problem with the heart valves.**

5. We listen to the lungs to check that there is air entry in all areas of the lungs.

**6. We feel the abdomen to check**

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**there is no enlargement of the liver, kidneys, spleen or other organs.**

7. Ears are examined for excess wax or any sign of perforated eardrum. Hearing is either checked by means of a whisper test or audiogram. Hearing deteriorates with age and exposure to noise, hence the need to wear protection. If either of these are unsatisfactory, a functional hearing assessment might be indicated.

**8. We check eyes for acceptable vision with or without correction at 50cm, 1m and 6m.**

9. Colour vision is checked at initial entry. We also check your visual field and make sure that there are no abnormal movements of the eyes, which could indicate an inner ear problem.

**10. A finger prick anaemia test is taken to measure haemoglobin.**

**Too high (very rare) can represent a blood disorder. Too low (more common) could show anaemia due to blood loss (e.g. heavy periods), or inadequate iron intake such as being a vegetarian, or both.**

11. A cholesterol test and lipid profile is checked aged 40. Abnormalities could indicate a higher risk of heart disease.

**12. Urine is checked for blood, sugar and protein; this could indicate kidney disease or diabetes.**

13. We check for normal functioning of limbs and reflexes.

**14. We record scars and tattoos for identification purposes.**

15. We make an observational assessment of the mental state of the pilot to see if there is any obvious mental disorder, stress, or evidence of excess alcohol or drug use. There is a move in ICAO to place more emphasis on this aspect and this could well change the medical in a few years' time.

**16. You are fortunate in having 30 minutes or more with a doctor so you have an excellent opportunity to discuss health and lifestyle issues in a relaxed and unhurried way... take advantage of it!**

*The views in this article are my own and not those of anybody else or any regulatory authority.*

