

PHYSIOLOGICAL FACTORS
(Revised September 2001)

8327

FATIGUE
(Revised September 2001)

8327.1

One of the prime contributors to aircraft accidents is fatigue. Stress-related factors such as temperature extremes, personal problems, noise, poor physical condition, and flying in a high-risk environment have a cumulative effect. Stress from all factors manifests itself in the form of fatigue. Some of the symptoms of fatigue are

- Physical exhaustion
- An increase in the number of errors
- Diminished range of attention
- Acceptance of unnecessary risk
- Unusual preoccupation
- Tendency to be careless
- Diminished visual acuity

Because flying requires constant mental alertness, division of attention, and quick accurate decision-making, fatigue must be kept within manageable limits. When a pilot, air attack officer, or helitack captain recognizes the symptoms of fatigue in him/herself or others, he/she should take immediate steps to eliminate it. Rest, proper eating habits, exercise, and resolution of personal problems will help in eliminating the effects of fatigue. If the fatigue cannot be eliminated, then the person must ground him/herself or be grounded until he/she is properly rested.

MEDICAL FACTORS AND MEDICATION
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As with fatigue, medical factors and certain types of medication can reduce a pilot's ability to perform to a point where he/she should be grounded. The Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) provide some general guidance, but lack specific information as to what would ground a pilot.

Some illnesses such as the common cold, sinus, or ear infection do not seriously impair ground personnel's work performance but can be very dangerous for flight crews. All aircrew members in evaluating their physical condition should exercise common sense and good judgment. If their health deteriorates for any reason, flight should be discontinued, and the individual should not fly until his/her general health improves.

The taking of medication offers special problems. Medicine prescribed by a doctor may or may not ground a pilot. When possible, try to use an FAA qualified aviation medical examiner as your doctor. If that isn't possible, ask your doctor if there are any side effects to the medication prescribed. Many over-the-counter medications cause drowsiness and cannot be taken if you are performing flight duties. Other medications may have adverse effects coupled with increased altitude. Nonprescription self-medication can be extremely dangerous. When possible, try to avoid using any more medication than is absolutely necessary. When medication is used, check the label. If it contains a warning against use of the medication while driving, pilots while flying should not use it. If there are any questions about the medication, call your doctor before taking it.

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