

United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service

Aviation Safety Alert

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Subject: Over the Counter Medications

Area of Concern: Aviation Operations

Distribution: Fire and Aviation Personnel

Allergy season is upon us and aviators are not exempt from the effects of pollen and mold to their sinuses. In aviation, the effects of this annoyance can be irritating, painful and sometimes catastrophic.

The common cure for these irritants is usually some “over the counter” medication to alleviate the side effects of allergies. This is, in some cases, a good rescue when you’re on the ground resting at home. However, in the air, the taking of “over the counter” medication may have disastrous results. Many of these “over the counter” medications have chemicals in them that may cause drowsiness and affect or impair the performance of a pilot/crewmember in flight. This may ultimately degrade your performance enough to make erroneous decisions that may jeopardize the outcome of your flight.

Only a “Flight Surgeon” can determine the medications that are suitable for a pilot/crewmember to take that won’t impair the decision-making skills needed for a safe flight.

Please read the following Code of Federal Regulation Title 14 subtitle (Federal Aviation Regulation) regarding medication. [Part 91.17](#), section a, subsection 3 references the use of drugs. Over the counter medications, although legal, can affect a pilot’s faculties and potentially create an unsafe environment in the cockpit.

§ 91.17 Alcohol or drugs.

(a) No person may act or attempt to act as a crewmember of a civil aircraft --

- (1) Within 8 hours after the consumption of any alcoholic beverage;
- (2) While under the influence of alcohol;
- (3) **While using any drug that affects the person's faculties in any way contrary to safety; or**
- (4) While having .04 percent by weight or more alcohol in the blood.

[Advisory Circular 91.11-1](#), Guide to Drug Hazards in Aviation Medicine, Section 14, Allergenic and Diagnostic Preparations and Antihistamines states:

ALLERGENIC AND DIAGNOSTIC PREPARATIONS

Allergenic preparations (danders, dusts, plants and many others) and skin test antigens (diphtheria, streptococcus, mumps, tuberculin)

Undesirable effects in aviation: Local whealing and urticaria.

Use in aviation personnel: Airman duties contraindicated for 6 hours after use or in presence of any later adverse effects.

ANTI-HISTAMINES

antazoline (Antistine), antergan, carbinoxamine (Clistin), chlorcyclizine (Perizil), chlorothen (Tagathen), chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton), chlorphenoxamine (Systiral), clemizole (Allercur), cyproheptadine (Periactin), dimethpyridene (Forhital), diphenhydramine (Benadryl), diphenylpraline (Diafen), doxylamine (Decapryn), methapheniline (Diatrine), methapyrilene (Histadyl), methdilazine (Tacaryl), phenindiamine (Thephorin), pheniramine (Trimeton), promethazine (Phenergan), proxamine, pyrathiazine (Pyrrolazote), pyrilamine maleate (Antamine; Antihist; Diamidide: Neo-antergan; Renstamin; Thylogen), pyrrobutamine (Pyronil), thenalidine (Sandostene), thenyldiamine (Thenfadil), thonzylamine (Anahist; Neo-hetramine), tripellenamine (Pyribenzamine), triprolidine (Actidil)

Undesirable effects in aviation: Drowsiness (excitement with phenindiamine), dizziness, dry mouth, headaches, nausea, muscular twitching, rare hyperpyrexia. The drowsiness can be a particular hazard because it may not be recognized by the patient, and because it may recur after seeming alertness.

Use in aviation personnel: Airman duties contraindicated for 24 hours after administration of usual dose; for 12 hours after one-half of the smallest adult dose listed in USP or NND.

Please share this with your fellow aviators and don't take the chance of thinking that this may never happen to you. Call your Flight Surgeon if you have any questions before you take medication and fly. Your crewmembers and passengers depend on your professionalism!

/s/ Ron Hanks

National Aviation Safety and Training Manager
U.S. Forest Service