



PROVING MEDICAL FITNESS TO FLY- AN INSIDER'S GUIDE!

As well as being a practicing GP, I have been one of the medical advisors to the BGA for the past few years.

From **8th April 2021**, anyone wanting to be pilot in command of an EASA aircraft, will need at least a LAPL medical certificate to prove their medical fitness to fly. This includes EASA sailplanes.

To find out more about the LAPL medical, go to the CAA website and have a look at this document:

Light Aircraft Pilot's Licence (LAPL) Medical Certificate – A Quick Guide for GPs
www.caa.co.uk/General-aviation/Pilot-licences/Applications/Medical/Apply-for-a-LAPL-medical-certificate

The guide contains a list of medical conditions. If you have any of them, your GP will not be able to perform a LAPL medical and you will need to see an AME (Aeromedical examiner) for your medical. If you have no medical issues, your GP may be able to complete the medical for you.

Please do not even think about contacting your GP for a LAPL medical at the present time. At the time of writing, due to the COVID19 pandemic, all routine work is being suspended. Your GP surgery will not be interested in discussing this with you. The following applies once the worst of the pandemic is over.

GP's are contracted by the NHS to provide "General Medical Services" (which includes the diagnosis and treatment of acute and chronic disease, health promotion activity and the completion of various statutory forms such as sick notes etc).

Performing medicals to participate in sports, such as gliding, is classed as private work, and GPs are entitled to decline to do it. If they do agree, they are entitled to charge a fee. With increasing NHS workload, many GPs are refusing this type of work, particularly if it seems too complex or risky.

My top tips are:

- 1 Download the Quick Guide for GPs, take it into the practice, leave it with them, and then ask if you can have a telephone consultation with one of the GPs to discuss it.
- 2 Nurse practitioners, doctors in training (who may be called a Foundation doctor, GP trainee or GP registrar), or locums, are unlikely to be able to help. If possible, try to find out which doctors are partners in the practice, and speak to one of them.
- 3 The medical itself is very similar to an HGV medical, which most GPs will be familiar with. Unlike the HGV medical, it does require your GP to register with the CAA on-line first, and to complete the medical forms on-line.

- 4 The LAPL medical requires assessment of near and intermediate vision as well as distance vision, the HGV medical - only requires distance vision. Most GPs will not have the equipment to assess near and intermediate vision – I would advise that you get a full eye test, including visual field tests, from your optician before seeing your GP and ask the optician to write down the results.

If your GP declines to perform a LAPL medical for you, you will need to see an AME.

Details of how to contact an AME are available from the CAA website www.caa.co.uk/medical

It is likely that the AME will want information about your medical condition from your GP records before he/she can make a decision about your fitness to fly.

You are entitled to access all information from your medical records after November 1991. To access copies of your medical records, you do not need to see your GP, the practice manager should be able to advise you on the procedure.

There is increasing ability for patients to access some or all their records on-line, again the practice manager would be able to advise, or you may find information on your practice website.

Meanwhile, there is lobbying by the BGA together with other aviation sporting organisations to the Department of Transport and CAA, to maintain the ability of recreational pilots to self-declare. There is a compelling evidence base that demonstrates that self-declaration for pilots of aircraft <2000 kg (all sailplanes) is safe and presents minimal risk to uninvolved third parties. It is believed that the Department of Transport and CAA are sympathetic. Self-declaration would only apply to flying within the UK and there is no current timescale. So self-declaration privileges MIGHT return in future, but the BGA approach is that pilots should prepare to obtain a LAPL medical certificate.

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Tracy is a practicing NHS General Practitioner and BGA medical advisor who alongside Frank Voeten, a practicing AME and BGA medical advisor, provide the BGA with excellent advice on medical matters. Both Tracy and Frank are glider pilots.

Further BGA medical guidance is at <https://members.gliding.co.uk/medical-2/>

From 8 April 2020, the privileges of an SPL may be exercised with a LAPL medical certificate.