

What to do before my DOT Physical Examination

No matter if this is your first time going thru a DOT required physical examination or you have had a dozen exams, this can make anyone nervous to be completed. We understand that this plays a key role in your ability to do your job and to continue with your career.

According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), the purpose of the DOT exam is to detect the presence of physical or mental conditions which affect the ability of the driver to operate a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) safely. The exam balances the driver's right to work versus the right of the public to drive on safe roads. In that regard, the DOT Certified Medical Examiner will focus on health issues that increase the risk of gradual or sudden incapacitation while driving a CMV. As a DOT driver, your role is to assist the medical examiner by providing accurate and comprehensive information about your general state of health.

While we understand how stressful this can be, the biggest piece of advice we can give when getting ready for this exam is fairly simple: just try to relax. The impact of continuing to stress over this exam can lead to real world impacts on your DOT physical.

Since so much hinges on the outcome of your DOT exam, it is on your best interest to prepare for your exam ahead of time. Below is a list of DO's and DON'Ts that should help:

1. At least a week before your scheduled DOT Exam, IF you have certain medical conditions, you should gather the following documentation for the examiner to review. Here are some examples that you would need to have further documentation for.
 - a. **Diabetes:** you will need to bring your most recent (within the last six months) hemoglobin A1c (HgA1c) blood test. It is also helpful to have your healthcare provider write a note about the care of your diabetes. The note should include the following:
 - i. List of all medications
 - ii. Any severe hypoglycemic reaction in the last year
 - iii. Any complications from your diabetes (heart, kidney, nerves)
 - iv. An assessment of whether your diabetes will interfere with your ability to drive a commercial motor vehicle safely

*Note: Diabetics using insulin are disqualified, **however**, you may be eligible for a Federal Exemption or a State Waiver (a state waiver allows you to drive a commercial motor vehicle only with the borders of that state).

 - v. OR, in place of the letter that they fill out with all of this specific information, you can have your healthcare provider fill out the Dot MCSA-5870 form for Insulin-Treated Diabetes Mellitus Assessment Form. See the link below for the form
[file:///C:/Users/e41803/Downloads/Insulin-Treated%20Diabetes%20Mellitus%20Assessment%20Form%20MCSA-5870%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/e41803/Downloads/Insulin-Treated%20Diabetes%20Mellitus%20Assessment%20Form%20MCSA-5870%20(1).pdf)
 - b. **Sleep Apnea:** with mild sleep apnea, treatment is optional: **however**, you should bring a copy of the sleep study that shows you have mild sleep apnea. With moderate sleep apnea, treatment is mandatory. The most common treatment is the use of a CPAP/BiPAP. If you use a CPAP/BiPAP machine, the machine's computer records the CPAP usage. You should contact the company that services your machine and get a printout of your CPAP/BiPAP usage. The data should cover a period of at minimum three months. FMCSA Medical Guidelines require the following minimal CPAP/BiPAP Usage: 70% of the nights for at least 4 hours per night. If you treat your sleep apnea with something other than a CPAP/BiPAP, you will need to bring documentation (usually a sleep study) showing that your treatment is effective.
 - c. **Heart:** If you have a history of heart attack(s), angina, angioplasty, or cardiac surgery, you will need a note from your cardiologist stating that your cardiac condition will not interfere with your ability to operate a Commercial Motor Vehicle safely.
 - i. Drivers with a history of heart attack, angina, or angioplasty must have an exercise stress test every two years.
 - ii. Drivers who have undergone cardiac bypass surgery, beginning five years after the surgery, will have to undergo exercise stress testing every year.

- d. **Hypertension (high blood pressure):** FMCSA regulations require your blood pressure to be 140/90 or less to receive a one-year DOT Medical Card. Many drivers are anxious while undergoing a DOT exam in an unfamiliar medical office. As a result, their blood pressure tends to be higher than normal. If you are a person who falls into this category, it may be helpful to bring in recent blood pressure readings from your personal healthcare provider.
 - e. **Blood Thinners:** if you are prescribed to take the blood thinner Coumadin (warfarin), you should provide a copy of your most recent INR blood test results. The medical examiner may also require a note from your healthcare provider regarding the condition for which you are prescribed the blood thinner (for example, atrial fibrillation, or blood clot).
 - f. **Psychiatric Conditions:** Psychiatric disorders are often treated with potent medication which have significant side effects, such as drowsiness. If you are under treatment for a psychiatric condition with medication, it would be useful to provide a note from your treating healthcare provider. The note should state that neither your psychiatric condition nor will your medication interfere with your ability to drive a commercial motor vehicle safely.
2. Make a list of all of your medications-both prescription and over the counter. Be sure to include dosages. You can use the link below to go to the form to give to your healthcare provider to fill out your prescribed medications and the dosages prior to your appointment.
<https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/medical/39141-cmv-driver-medication-form-mcsa-5895-optional>
 3. Make a list of all the healthcare providers involved in your physical and mental health. Be sure to include their phone numbers. You or the examiner may need to contact one or more of these individuals for further documentation.
 4. The night before your exam, get a good night's sleep. If you arrive for your DOT exam in a fatigued state, it may affect your health, especially your blood pressure.
 5. The morning of your DOT Exam, take all of your medications as usual. This is very important for individuals who have diabetes or hypertension. Missing even one dose of your blood pressure medication may result in significantly elevated blood pressure during your exam.
 6. DO NOT eat a big meal right before your exam. This is especially important for diabetics. A urine test (urinalysis) is part of the DOT exam. A large meal may lead to the spilling of sugar into you urine resulting in an abnormal urinalysis.
 7. Avoid Stimulants. This would include, coffee, tea, caffeinated soda, energy drinks and some cold and allergy medications. Tobacco and Nicotine products should also be avoided before your DOT exam. An undesirable side effect of stimulants is they often raise your blood pressure and speed up your heart rate.
 8. Avoid salty foods. Excess sodium tends to elevate a person's blood pressure.
 9. Part of your DOT Exam is a vision test. FMCSA Regulations require your distance vision to be 20/40 or better in each eye separately. If you wear eyeglasses for distance, be sure to bring them with you to your appointment. This also goes for contact lens wearers.
 10. Drink plenty of Cold Water. As you will be asked to provide a urine specimen as part of your DOT Exam. Arrive at the medical examiner's office well hydrated. You do not want to hang around waiting to produce an adequate quantity of urine. There is a benefit of drink cold water – it does help to lower your blood pressure.
 11. Allow plenty of time to get to you DOT Exam appointment. If you have to rush around to make it to your appointment you are just going to cause yourself extra stress, which will make your blood pressure and heart rate increase.
 12. When you arrive at your appointment you will be asked to fill out the first portion of the Medical Examination Report which includes your Drivers information and health history. You will need to fill out this paperwork as completely and truthfully as possible. If you were to decide to omit important medical information, there can be negative consequences. Any fraud in completing your DOT Paperwork may be reported directly to the FMCSA and may result in a fine and loss of DOT driving privileges.
*to help reduce some of the anxiety and the stress over filling out all of the necessary information for your Medical Exam Report, you can fill out this form before you arrive at your appointment so that you have the time to make sure you have all of your information correct. Follow the link below to get to the Medical Examination Report Form.
<https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/medical/medical-examination-report-form-commercial-driver-medical-certification>
 13. Many medical offices get backed up during the course of a busy day. This could cause some delays in fully completing your DOT physical. Don't let this stress you out. Relax, take deep breaths, think happy thoughts, read a book or magazine and drink cold water. Letting stress get to you will serve no useful purpose; it may only raise your blood pressure and heart rate.