

Common Misconceptions About DOT Physicals

1. Only Truck Drivers Need DOT Physicals

Truck drivers are the most frequent candidates for DOT physicals. However, anyone operating a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) that weighs over 10,000 pounds, carries eight or more passengers, or crosses interstate lines may need to pass a DOT medical exam.



2. You Have to Have Perfect Health to Pass a DOT Exam

A Department of Transportation physical exam assesses whether you can safely operate a motor vehicle. If you have health conditions you manage properly, they may not disqualify you from obtaining a commercial driver's license. The key is whether your health condition poses a safety risk to you or others on the road.



3. You Only Need the DOT Physical Once

Many drivers think a DOT physical exam is a one-time requirement, but it's actually needed every two years unless you have a health condition that requires more frequent monitoring. If you're not recertified after two years, you risk losing your CDL. Certain drivers, such as HazMat or school bus drivers, may need to take the exam more often.

4. Failing a DOT Physical Will Result in Immediate Job Loss

Failing your DOT physical doesn't always mean immediate job loss, but you may need to address the condition before returning to work. However, certain medical conditions may be too severe to manage, in which case, for safety reasons, you will need to find a different form of employment.



5. You Have to Have 20/20 Vision to Pass a DOT Physical

A DOT physical tests your vision since it's crucial for driving. Drivers with vision impairment can still pass by using corrective lenses if their vision meets the standards: at least 20/40 in each eye and the ability to distinguish between red, amber, and green. If only one eye meets the requirements, a federal form from an eye specialist can help you pass the physical.

6. You Can't Pass a DOT Physical and Drive if You Are Over 60

There is no age restriction for obtaining a CDL as long as you meet the physical, mental, and medical requirements. Anyone 21 and older can pass the DOT exam and get a commercial driver's license, while individuals under 21 can take the exam but won't be eligible for a CDL until they turn 21.



7. Prescription Medications Will Disqualify You From Driving

Many drivers are hesitant to take prescription medications, worrying that it will disqualify them from operating a commercial vehicle. This isn't necessarily the case. In fact, some prescription medications allow drivers to safely manage medical conditions and continue driving when they may not be able to otherwise.

8. A DOT Physical is Only About Your Physical Health

The DOT exam assesses both physical and mental fitness to drive. Along with checking vision, heart health, and other physical conditions, it also evaluates mental health. Conditions like severe depression, schizophrenia, or untreated sleep apnea can disqualify you, as they may impact your ability to drive safely.



9. You Can't Drive if you Have Diabetes

Diabetes alone typically doesn't disqualify you from passing a DOT physical exam, and many drivers with diabetes have successful careers. However, you must provide documentation of your condition, treatment, and blood sugar levels. If your blood sugar levels are uncontrolled, you may only qualify for a temporary certification.

10. A DOT Physical is Either a Pass or a Fail

Yes, the immediate result of a DOT physical is either a pass or a fail, but it isn't as cut and dry as it sounds. If the examiner has concerns about your health, you might receive a temporary certificate, giving you time to seek treatment or manage a condition. These temporary certificates typically last from three months to a year.



11. All Doctors Can Conduct a DOT Physical

You can't just go to your regular GP to get a DOT physical exam. An FMCSA-certified medical examiner must conduct the exam. If you've wondered, "How do I find a DOT-certified medical examiner near me?" you can use the TeamCME locator tool to find a local certified FMCSA medical examiner.

