

Improving Longevity of Your Most Important Aircraft System- YOU!

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For many seasoned pilots, aircraft owners, and adventure seekers—the cockpit has long been a source of freedom. But what if the very place that grants us such liberty is also grounding our long-term health?

The reality of a sedentary aviation lifestyle, especially for those in their 50s and beyond, is sobering. Long hours sitting in confined spaces slow blood circulation, weaken muscles, and increase the risk of conditions like hypertension, high cholesterol, and Type 2 diabetes. The FAA may not check your metabolic health at every medical, but neglecting it can eventually threaten your certification. Or worse, your life.

Fitness and Flight

Your aircraft isn't the only system that relies on regular maintenance. Consistent movement improves musculoskeletal strength, joint function, fat metabolism, and insulin sensitivity. Resistance training, even just twice a week, supports muscle preservation and bone density, crucial factors for aging pilots.

Just as importantly, exercise enhances cognitive function. Aerobic activity increases blood flow to the brain, improves memory, sharpens attention, and elevates mood. Studies show that moderate-intensity workouts stimulate neurogenesis and the release of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), supporting decision-making, spatial awareness, and reaction time.

Nutrition and Flight

Quality nutrition isn't about fads or cutting food groups—it's about fueling performance. Let's break it down:

- **Proteins** like grilled chicken, salmon, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, tofu, and eggs support muscle repair, neurotransmitter function, and satiety.
- **Healthy fats** such as avocados, olive oil, almonds, walnuts, and fatty fish (like salmon or tuna) reduce inflammation, aid hormone production, and protect your brain.
- **Carbohydrates** are your body's most accessible energy source. Choose slow-digesting, high-quality options like oats, brown rice, sweet potatoes, quinoa, and whole grain bread.
- **Fiber**—found in carbohydrates like black beans, lentils, berries, chia seeds, and leafy greens—not only aids digestion and supports gut health, but also helps regulate blood sugar and cholesterol.

Hydration is equally vital. Dehydration impairs oxygen delivery and decision-making speed—especially at altitude, where dry cabin air accelerates fluid loss. Even mild dehydration can negatively affect reaction time, memory, and focus. Staying hydrated is one of the simplest ways to maintain safety and stamina. Add lemon or electrolytes to your water to enhance absorption and encourage consistent intake.

Prevent, Don't React

Waiting for a medical scare is no strategy. Just as you wouldn't take off without a preflight checklist, you shouldn't approach your health without a plan. Start small: aim for 8,000–10,000 steps a day, strength train twice per week, and hydrate adequately. When dining out, make smart substitutions—opt for grilled over fried, skip the extra sauces, and ask for half portions.

If tracking calories sounds intimidating, think of it like managing your aircraft's weight and balance. It's not restrictive; it's empowering.

We thrive on precision and planning. Apply that same discipline to your health. Whether you're prepping for an international flight or your next hangar meet-up, prioritize the body that makes it possible.

Health isn't a destination. It's your aircraft's most important system. And just like a preflight checklist, small, consistent actions ensure longevity in the skies and life.

Visit the MHHC website health resources page for additional health resources at:

www.MileHighHealthClub.life.

Fly safer. Fly smarter. Fly healthier.