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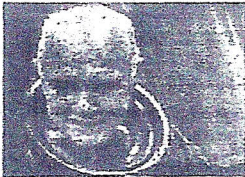
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John Glenn in his Mercury suit



John Glenn during STS-95 training

## John Glenn: from Mercury to Space Shuttle

Thirty-six years ago John Glenn made history when he strapped himself into a nine-by-seven-foot capsule atop an experimental rocket and became the first American to orbit the Earth. Unlike most astronauts, he never got the opportunity for a second flight.

Recently he asked NASA if he could fly again to conduct space-based research on aging, but only if he met the agency's physical and mental requirements.

NASA Administrator Daniel S. Goldin responded by telling the public that "Not only is John Glenn a Marine test pilot, an astronaut, and the first American to orbit the Earth, he brings a unique blend of experience to NASA. He has flight, operational, and policy experience. He is part of the NASA family, an American hero, and he has the right stuff for this mission."

Since aging and space flight share a number of similar physiological responses, the study of space flight may provide a model system to help scientists interested in understanding aging. Some of these similarities include bone and muscle loss, balance disorders, and sleep disturbances.

Before NASA made the decision to fly Glenn, the senator underwent a battery of medical tests conducted by NASA physicians and by independent consultants. They all found him medically qualified for space flight. According to NASA flight surgeons, Glenn's fitness level is excellent.

"We have 42 years of medical history on Senator Glenn and we were able to perform an exhaustive medical evaluation," said Dr. Denise Baisden, a NASA flight surgeon. "He is medically qualified to fly."

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