



## COVID-19



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# Requirement for Proof of Negative COVID-19 Test or Recovery from COVID-19 for All Air Passengers Arriving in the United States

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**If you plan to travel internationally, you will need to get tested no more than 3 days before you travel by air into the United States (US) and show your negative result to the airline before you board your flight, or be prepared to show documentation of recovery (proof of a recent positive viral test and a letter from your healthcare provider or a public health official stating that you were cleared to travel).**

On January 12, 2021, CDC announced an [Order](#) requiring all air passengers arriving to the US from a foreign country to get tested no more than 3 days before their flight departs and to present the negative result or documentation of having recovered from COVID-19 to the airline before boarding the flight. Air passengers will also be required to confirm that the information they present is true in the form of an attestation. **This Order is effective as of 12:01am EST (5:01am GMT) on January 26, 2021.**

For the full list of requirements and exemptions, please review the language in the [Order](#).

### International Travel Recommendations

International travel poses additional risks and even fully vaccinated travelers are at increased risk for getting and possibly spreading new COVID-19 variants.

CDC recommends delaying [international travel](#) until you are fully vaccinated.

Follow CDC's [after international travel](#) recommendations.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## General

### **Does this requirement apply to US citizens?**

This Order applies to all air passengers, 2 years of age or older, traveling into the US, including US citizens and legal permanent residents.

### **Are noncitizens no longer subject to Presidential Proclamation travel restrictions if they can show a negative test or documentation of recovery?**

The CDC order does not replace the Presidential proclamations. Therefore, a negative test result for COVID-19 or documentation of having recovered from COVID-19 to the airline before boarding the flight does not exempt a foreign national from the travel restrictions outlined in the Presidential proclamations.

With specific exceptions, several Presidential proclamations suspend and limit entry into the United States, as immigrants or nonimmigrants, all noncitizens who were physically present within specific countries during the 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry into the United States.

For a full list of countries and links to the proclamations on the White House website, visit [Travelers Prohibited from Entry to the United States](#).

### **Are US territories considered foreign countries for the purposes of this Order?**

No, the Order to present a documentation of a negative COVID-19 test or recovery from COVID-19 does not apply to air passengers flying from a US territory to a US state.

US territories include American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.

### **If I fly from a US state or territory to another US state or territory, but have to transit through a foreign country, am I still required to get a test before the first flight?**

If you booked an itinerary from a US state or territory to another US state or territory and the itinerary has you taking a connecting flight through a foreign country, you do not need to be tested. An example of this situation is an itinerary booked between the Northern Mariana Islands (a US territory) and the US mainland via Japan.

For information about what to do if you have a short trip to a foreign country from the US, see FAQ *Can a test taken before departure from the US be used to return within the 3-day timeframe? How will testing requirements be handled for short trips?*

### **Why does the Order specify 3 days rather than 72 hours? What is considered 3 days?**

The 3-day period is the 3 days before the flight's departure. The Order uses a 3-day timeframe instead of 72 hours to provide more flexibility to the traveler. By using a 3-day window, test validity does not depend on the time of the flight or the time of day that the test was administered.

For example, if a passenger's flight is at 1pm on a Friday, the passenger could board with a negative test that was taken any time on the prior Tuesday or after.

### **What is an attestation?**

An attestation is a statement, writing, entry, or other representation under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 that confirms that the information provided is true.

### **Does this Order apply to land border crossings?**

No, the requirements of this Order only apply to air travel into the US.

### **Who is checking to make sure that people have a negative test or documentation of recovery before they board a plane to the US?**

The airline will confirm a COVID-19 negative test result or documentation of recovery for all passengers before boarding.

### **What types of SARS-CoV-2 test are acceptable under the Order?**

Passengers must be tested with a viral test that could be either an antigen test or a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT). Examples of available NAATs for SARS-CoV-2 include but are not restricted to reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), reverse transcription loop-mediated isothermal amplification (RT-LAMP), transcription-mediated amplification (TMA), nicking enzyme amplification reaction (NEAR), and helicase-dependent amplification (HDA). The test used must be authorized for use by the relevant national authority for the detection of SARS-CoV-2 in the country where the test is administered. A viral test conducted for U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) personnel, including DOD contractors, dependents, and other U.S. government employees, and tested by a DOD laboratory located in a foreign country also meets the requirements of the Order.

### **Can I get a rapid test?**

Rapid tests are acceptable as long as they are a viral test acceptable under the Order.

### **Does an at home test qualify?**

The Order requires a lab report to be presented to the airline or to public health officials upon request. A home specimen collection kit that is tested in a laboratory should meet the requirements, if such methods have been authorized by the country's national health authorities. A viral test conducted for U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) personnel, including DOD contractors, dependents, and other U.S. government employees, and tested by a DOD laboratory located in a foreign country also meets the requirements of the Order.

### **What is a verifiable test result?**

A verifiable test result must be in the form of written documentation (paper or electronic copy) of a laboratory test result. Testing must be performed using a viral test (NAAT or antigen), and negative results must be presented to the airline prior to boarding. The test

result documentation must include information that identifies the person, a specimen collection date and the type of test. A negative test result must show test was done within the 3 days before the flight. A positive test result must show the test was done within the 3 months before the flight.

**Does a negative test result or documentation of recovery need to be in English?**

Airlines and other aircraft operators must be able to confirm the test result and review other required information, and should determine when translation is necessary for these purposes. Passengers whose documents are in a language other than English should check with their airline or aircraft operator before travel.

**If a passenger has tested positive for COVID-19, and then tests negative, can that passenger travel?**

Individuals with known or suspected COVID-19 should self-isolate and [NOT travel](#) until they have met CDC's [criteria for discontinuing isolation](#).

**If a passenger has a negative test, but was a close contact of a known COVID case, can that passenger travel?**

Individuals who have had close contact with a person with COVID-19 (i.e., who are considered exposed to COVID-19), should self-quarantine and [NOT travel](#) until they have met CDC [criteria for discontinuing quarantine](#).

**Do the requirements of this Order apply to diplomats and special visa holders?**

Diplomats and special visa holders are not exempt from this Order.

## Passengers

**What if I have had a COVID-19 vaccine or have tested positive for antibodies? Do I still need a negative COVID-19 test or documentation of recovery from COVID-19?**

Yes, at this time all air passengers traveling to the US, regardless of vaccination or antibody status, are required to provide a negative COVID-19 test result or documentation of recovery.

**When do I need to get a test to travel to the US and what kind of test do I need?**

Get tested no more than 3 days before your flight to the US departs. Make sure to be tested with a [viral test](#) (NAAT or antigen test) to determine if you are currently infected with COVID-19. Also make sure that you receive your results before your flight departs and have documentation of your results to show the airline.

**Do state and local governments in the US have separate testing requirements for air passengers?**

Federal testing requirements must be met to board a plane to the US. Some state and local governments may have similar or more restrictive testing requirements for air passengers arriving in their jurisdictions. Always check and follow [state and local](#) recommendations or requirements related to travel in addition to federal requirements.

**Can a test taken before departure from the US be used to return within the 3-day timeframe? How will testing requirements be handled for short trips?**

If a trip is shorter than 3 days, a viral test taken in the United States can be used to fulfill the requirements of the Order as long as the specimen was taken no more than three days before the return flight to the US departs. If the return travel is delayed longer than 3 days after the test, the passenger will need to be retested before the return flight.

Travelers considering this option should additionally consider the availability of appropriate testing capacity at their destinations, and the time frame needed to obtain results, as a contingency when making plans for travel.

**What if I recently recovered from COVID-19?**

CDC does not recommend getting tested again in the three months after a positive viral test, as long as you do not have [symptoms of COVID-19](#). If you have had a positive viral test in the past 3 months, and you have [met the criteria to end isolation](#), you may travel instead with documentation of your positive viral test results and a letter from your healthcare provider or a public health official that states you have been cleared for travel. The positive test result and letter together are referred to as “documentation of recovery.”

A letter from your healthcare provider or a public health official that clears you to end isolation, e.g., to return to work or school, can be used to show you are cleared to travel, even if travel isn't specifically mentioned in the letter.

**What happens if I don't take a test and want to travel to the US?**

Air passengers traveling to the US are required to present a negative COVID-19 test result or documentation of recovery. Airlines must confirm the negative test result or documentation of recovery for all passengers before boarding. If a passenger chooses not to present a test result or documentation of recovery, the airline must deny boarding to the passenger.

**What if I am overseas and can't get tested before my flight?**

Passengers should contact the airline regarding options for changing their departure date to allow time for a test, see if the airline has identified options for testing, or if there are options available for changing their flights to transit through a location where they can get tested before boarding their final flight to the United States.

**I am unable to find a testing site that has a turnaround time of 1-3 days abroad. What should I do?**

Travelers should consider the availability of appropriate testing capacity at their destinations, and the time frame needed to obtain results, as a contingency when making plans for travel.

For more information on where to obtain a test overseas, travelers should review the relevant [U.S. Embassy website](#) . Travelers may need to consider a routing change to a different country or city in order to meet the testing requirement.

**What happens if I test positive?**

People should [self-isolate](#) and [delay](#) their travel if symptoms develop or a pre-departure test result is positive until they have [recovered from COVID-19](#). Airlines must refuse to board anyone who does not present a negative test result for COVID-19 or documentation of recovery.

### **What kind of documentation of my test result or documentation of recovery do I need to present?**

Before boarding a flight to the US, you will need to show a paper or electronic copy of your negative test result for review by the airline and for review upon request by public health officials after you arrive in the US.

If you are traveling with documentation of recovery, you must present paper or electronic copies of your positive test result (dated no more than 90 days ago) and a signed letter, on official letterhead that contains the name, address, and phone number of a licensed healthcare provider or public health official, stating that you have been cleared to end isolation and therefore can travel. A letter that states that you have been cleared to end isolation to return to work or school is also acceptable. The letter does not have to specifically mention travel.

### **What personally identifying information is required to confirm negative test result or documentation of recovery? Does it need to be in English?**

Airlines and other aircraft operators must be able to confirm the test result and review other required information. There should be sufficient personally identifiable information on the test result or documentation of recovery to ensure a match with the person's passport or other travel information. This could include but is not limited to name, date or birth, age, passport number, etc.

Airlines and other aircraft operators should determine when translation of results or documentation of recovery is necessary for these purposes. Passengers whose documents are in a language other than English should check with their airline or aircraft operator before travel.

See also, *What kind of documentation of my test result or documentation of recovery do I need to present?*

### **Can I get an exemption or waiver to the testing requirement?**

Exemptions may be granted on an extremely limited basis when emergency travel (like an emergency medical evacuation) must occur to preserve someone's life, health against a serious danger, or physical safety and testing cannot be completed before travel.

### **Can I apply for a humanitarian exemption?**

CDC may grant a humanitarian exemption in limited circumstances only when an individual must travel to the United States to preserve health and safety (e.g. emergency medical evacuations) and is unable to access or complete the testing requirement before travel. Individuals and organizations sponsoring individuals who fit the exemption criteria described in CDC's Order should contact the U.S. embassy or consulate in the country from which they are departing for the United States. The embassy will then transmit this information to the CDC for consideration.

You can contact the [nearest U.S. embassy or consulate](#) , or call these numbers at the U.S. Department of State headquarters: From the United States and Canada: 888-407-4747; from overseas: 202-501-4444

**NOTE: A humanitarian exemption is not needed for people who need to travel via private or medical transport to the United States after testing positive for COVID-19.** People who test positive for COVID-19 and have not met CDC [criteria to end isolation](#) are exempt from the requirements under the Order if they travel via private or medical transport to the United States. The aircraft operator transporting the person must adhere to CDC's [Interim Guidance for Transporting or Arranging Transportation by Air into, from, or within the United States of People with COVID-19 or COVID-19 Exposure](#). CDC's guidance states that other passengers who do not have COVID-19 should not be transported with infected passengers. If a parent or caregiver is required to accompany a minor or other infected person needing assistance during travel, that person must apply for a humanitarian exemption if unable to be tested within 3 days of the medivac departure.

To facilitate the review of a humanitarian exemption request, the following information should be provided to the embassy or consulate for transmission to the CDC:

- For each passenger: Name (family name/surname, given name), Passport number and Nationality
- Cell phone, including country code, of passenger or head of household if family unit
- Email of passenger or head of household if family unit
- U.S. destination address
  - Is U.S. destination home address?
- Departure date and flight itinerary, including any connecting flights
- Name of submitting entity if different from passenger
  - Name of company submitting on behalf of passenger(s) (if applicable)
  - Name of point of contact (POC) submitting on behalf of passenger(s) (if applicable)
  - Phone and email address for POC submitting exemption request on behalf of passenger(s) (if applicable)
- Purpose of travel to the United States (provide brief explanation of why urgent travel is needed, and how travel will contribute to health and safety of passengers(s))
- Justification for testing exemption (e.g. no testing available, impact on health and safety)
- Documentation to support justification for test exemption (e.g. medical records or orders for medical evacuation)

See the [Department of State's website](#)  for more information on assistance for U.S. citizens overseas.

**Do passengers also need to have a copy of their attestation as well as the**

**airline retaining it?**

Passengers are only required to retain a paper or electronic copy of their negative test result or documentation of recovery for the entirety of their itinerary. The attestation should be submitted to and retained by the airline or aircraft operator.

**Should passengers retain proof of a negative test or documentation of recovery?**

Yes, passengers must still retain a paper or electronic copy of the necessary documentation as federal public health officials may request to see these documents at the port of entry. State, territorial, tribal and/or local health departments in the United States may also request them under their own public health authorities.

**If I am connecting through the US to another country, do I still need to get tested?**

Yes. Any flight entering the US, even for a connection, will require testing before departure.

**If I have one or more connecting flights to the US, does the 3-day period apply to the first flight or the last one? Do I need to get another test if I have a connecting flight?**

If your itinerary has you arriving to the US via one or more connecting flights, your test can be taken within the 3 days before the departure of the first flight.

If the 3-day testing period expires before one of your connecting flights, you only need to get retested before boarding connecting flights if:

- You planned an itinerary incorporating one or more overnight stays en route to the US. (NOTE: You do not need to be retested if the itinerary requires an overnight connection because of limitations in flight availability.), OR
- The connecting flight is delayed past the 3-day limit of testing due to a situation outside of your control (e.g., delays because of severe weather or aircraft mechanical problem), and that delay is more than 48 hours past the 3-day limit for testing.

**What happens if my flight (or first flight if itinerary includes connecting flights) is delayed past the 3-day limit for testing?**

If the initial departing flight in your trip is delayed past the 3-day limit of testing due to a situation outside of your control (e.g., delays because of severe weather or aircraft mechanical problem), and that delay is **24 hours** or less past the 3-day limit for testing, you do not need to be retested. If the delay is more than **24 hours** past the 3-day limit, then you will need to be retested.

**What happens if my connecting flight is delayed past the 3-day limit for testing?**

If the connecting flight in your trip is delayed past the 3-day limit of testing due to a situation outside of your control (e.g., delays because of severe weather or aircraft mechanical problem), and that delay is less than **48 hours** past the 3-day limit for testing, you do not need to be retested. If the delay is more than **48 hours** past the 3-day limit, then you will need to be retested.

See also *If I have one or more connecting flights to the US, does the 3-day period apply to the first flight or the last one? Do I need to get another test if I have a connecting flight?*

### **If I tested negative before my flight, do I need to get another test when I get to the US?**

CDC recommends that travelers get tested 3-5 days after travel **AND** stay home or otherwise self-quarantine for 7 days after travel. Even if you test negative, stay home for the full 7 days. If you don't get tested, it's safest to stay home for 10 days. Always follow [state and local](#) recommendations or requirements related to travel.

All travelers (including those who have recovered from COVID-19) should remember to [wear a mask](#), [stay at least 6 feet apart](#) from people who are not in your household, and [wash their hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing and before eating. Travelers should look for [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, and take your temperature if you feel sick. Anyone sick with symptoms of COVID-19 should [self-isolate](#) and [delay](#) further travel.

For more information, visit [After You Travel](#).

### **Do I need to get a test before leaving the US?**

At this time, CDC does not have a testing requirement for outbound travelers, but recommends that you get tested with a [viral test](#) (NAAT or antigen) 1-3 days before you travel internationally. Travelers should check with international destinations for their entry requirements.

### **What is the justification for letting people who recently recovered from COVID-19 travel without a negative test? What about reinfections?**

People who have recovered from COVID-19 can continue to test positive for up to 3 months after their infection. CDC does not recommended retesting within 3 months after a person with COVID-19 first developed symptoms (or the date of their first positive viral diagnostic test if their infection was asymptomatic). Even if they have recovered from COVID-19, people who develop [symptoms of COVID-19](#) should not travel and should seek care for testing and evaluation. This guidance may be updated as additional information about people who have recovered from COVID-19 becomes available.

### **Can CDC help me get a refund for travel expenses if I have to cancel or delay travel because of testing requirements for air passengers flying to the US?**

CDC does not reimburse and is unable to help travelers get reimbursements for travel expenses as a result of canceled or delayed travel because of COVID-19 or testing requirements for air passengers flying to the US. While some companies may base their policies on CDC's travel recommendations or requirements, each company establishes its own refund policies.

In some cases, trip cancellation insurance can protect your financial investment in a trip if you need to change your itinerary in the event of an international outbreak. Visit CDC's [Travelers' Health website](#) if you would like to learn more about travel insurance, including trip cancellation insurance.



### [Safety Alerts for Operators \(SAFO\) \[PDF – 7 pages\]](#)

issued jointly by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and CDC.

Other persons, such as maintenance personnel or contractors, may also be exempted if:

1. Their travel is for the purpose of operating the aircraft or ensuring the safety of flight operations; AND
2. The air carrier extends its occupational health and safety program to cover these individuals and ensures these persons follow the protocols contained in SAFO and CDC guidance; AND
3. The travel cannot be planned with sufficient time to enable the employee to take a COVID-19 test and obtain the results before the operational travel.

Air carriers or operators who assign their crew to travel in an official duty status (i.e., position or deadhead) on another air carrier should coordinate with that air carrier regarding their crew member's eligibility for an exemption from testing.

CDC expects that air carriers or operators will determine whether their employee's travel meets the requirements of the exemption. CDC also recommends that crew travel with an official statement (paper or electronic copy) from the carrier or operator that the employee's travel meets the requirements of the exemption.

Operators of aircraft that are not operating under an air carrier's or operator's occupational health and safety program as described above are not exempt from the requirements of the Order.

### **Are federal law enforcement personnel exempt from the requirements of this Order?**

Official travel by federal law enforcement officers is exempt from the requirements of the order if:

1. Federal law enforcement is carrying out a law enforcement function (e.g., for security purposes) on the aircraft; AND
2. the urgent need to travel does not allow time for testing

CDC expects that federal law enforcement agencies will determine whether their employees' travel meets the requirements of the exemption. CDC recommends that employees travel with a copy of their travel orders and a signed statement (paper or electronic) from their agency stating that the employee's travel meets the requirements of the exemption.

### **Are U.S. Department of Defense personnel exempt from the testing requirement?**

U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) personnel, which includes military personnel and civilian employees, dependents, contractors (including whole aircraft charter operators), and other U.S. government employees traveling on DOD aircraft or official DOD travel orders are exempt from the requirements of this Order, provided that such individuals are observing DOD testing requirements and recommendations described in DOD's *Force Protection Guidance Supplement 14 – Department of Defense Guidance for Personnel Traveling During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic* (December 29, 2020) including its testing guidance.

DOD whole aircraft contract charter operators are also exempt from the requirements of CDC's order when transporting DOD personnel including military personnel and civilian employees, dependents, other US Government employees, and contractors traveling under competent orders and observing DOD precautions.

CDC expects that DOD will determine what is considered "official travel orders" that would meet the requirements of this exemption. CDC recommends that DOD personnel traveling on non-DOD aircraft carry their official travel orders with them and present to air carrier/operator or public health authorities if needed. DOD personnel, including associated personnel who are traveling on non-DOD aircraft and not on official travel orders, remain subject to CDC's testing order.

### **Where can airlines find the industry protocols that crew must follow to qualify for the exemption?**

See [Safety Alert for Operators](#)  [PDF - 1 page]  for the relevant guidance issued jointly by the Federal Aviation Administration.

### **Will the US Government release the attestation form in other languages?**

At this time, the attestation form is not available in other languages. Airlines and aircraft operators may use a third party to provide translations of the attestation. However, the airline or aircraft operator is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of any translation. The airline or aircraft operator may not shift this responsibility to a third party.

### **Can air carriers and operators create electronic/digital versions of the attestation? If electronic forms are used, what constitutes 'signing'?**

Air carriers and operators must ensure that the attestation is submitted by each passenger or an authorized representative before the flight's departure. Boarding processes must incorporate a process by which either a physical signature, an authenticated digital signature, or an electronic system that uses unique identifiers to ensure the person filling out the electronic attestation form is the passenger or an authorized representative. For example, similar methods to those used to verify the

identity of a passenger using a pre-boarding kiosk or an air carrier's or operator's website or app to obtain a boarding pass could be used to ensure that the passenger or authorized representative is the individual completing the attestation.

Alternatively, the air carrier or operator can use authenticated digital signatures (e.g., DocuSign) or an electronic version of an attestation that ensures only the individual passenger, or their authorized representative, has access to the data entry process (e.g., after keying in username/password or other identifying and/or itinerary-specific information as part of the pre-boarding or check in process).

Either method is acceptable if the air carrier or operator can be reasonably certain that the individual, or their authorized representative, is the only person that has access to the data entry process required to submit the attestation.

**Can airlines/aircraft operators use an attestation only in a foreign language (rather than an English translation), so that the only version retained for two years would be in a foreign language?**

Yes, airlines/aircraft operators may use and retain an attestation only in a foreign language.

**The attestation may be difficult for our passengers to understand. Can the US Government or airlines provide a simpler version?**

At this time, there is no alternative form of attestation. Airlines and aircraft operators must use the current attestation without alternation.

**What should airlines and operators of private flights or general aviation aircraft do with passenger attestations?**

Operators of private flights and general aviation aircraft must maintain passenger attestations for two years, per the Order.

**Do airlines and operators of private flights or general aviation aircraft need to keep copies of passenger test results?**

No, passengers must show a copy of their test results to airline employees or the aircraft operator before boarding, but the airline or aircraft operator does not need to retain copies of test results.

**Is there specific guidance operators of private flights or general aviation aircraft need to follow if they want to transport a patient who has tested positive, or exposed contacts?**

For transporting patients that have tested positive for COVID-19, operators must adhere to [CDC's Interim Guidance for Transporting or Arranging Transportation by Air into, from, or within the United States of People with COVID-19 or COVID-19 Exposure](#).

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