

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



## Testing and International Air Travel

Updated Nov. 21, 2020 [Print](#)



These CDC recommendations are based on the latest public health science to inform safer, more responsible international travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. These recommendations are not intended to be requirements for the travel industry. Follow all destination and airline recommendations or requirements.

Air travel requires spending time in security lines and airport terminals, which can bring you in close contact with other people and frequently touched surfaces. Social distancing is difficult in busy airports and on crowded flights, and sitting within 6 feet of others, sometimes for hours, may increase your risk of getting COVID-19. How you get to and from the airport, such as with [public transportation and ridesharing](#), can also increase your chances of being exposed to the virus.

Testing before and after travel can reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Testing does not eliminate all risk, but when paired with a period of staying at home and everyday precautions like [wearing masks](#) and [social distancing](#), it can make travel safer by reducing spread on planes, in airports, and at destinations.

Here's what to know:

- Get tested 1-3 days before your flight.
- Get tested 3-5 days after travel **AND** stay home 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 14 days after travel.
- Always follow [state and local](#) recommendations or requirements related to travel.
- [Delay your](#) travel if you are waiting for test results.

Travelers with a known exposure to COVID-19 should [delay travel](#), [quarantine](#) themselves from other people for 14 days after their last known exposure, get [tested](#), and monitor their health.

# Get Tested Before Your Flight

Below is what you need to know about getting tested before your international flight.

- Get tested with a [viral test](#) 1-3 days before you depart and again 1-3 days before you return.
- Make sure you get your test results before you travel. If you are waiting for results, delay your travel.
- **Do not travel if your test result is positive**; immediately [isolate](#) yourself, and follow [public health recommendations](#).
- A negative test does not mean that you were not exposed or that you will not develop COVID-19. Make sure to [wear a mask](#), stay at least 6 feet from others, wash your hands, and watch your health for [signs of illness](#) while traveling.
- Keep a copy of your test results with you during travel. You may be asked for them.

## Plan Ahead

Check if your airline requires any health information, testing, or other documents. Some destinations require testing before travel and/or after arrival. Information about testing requirements for your destination may be available from the Office of Foreign Affairs or Ministry of Health, or the [US Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Country Information webpage](#) [↗](#).

Take steps to reduce higher-risk activities for 14 days before your trip and get tested 1-3 days before you travel. This could help reduce the chance that your travel will be interrupted or delayed by COVID-19.

All travelers with any known exposure to COVID-19 should [delay travel](#), [quarantine](#) themselves from other people for 14 days after their last known exposure, get [tested](#), and monitor their health.

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## Get Tested & Take Precautions After Your Flight

Get tested 3-5 days after travel **AND** stay home 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 14 days. Always follow [state and local](#) recommendations or requirements related to travel.

A negative test does not mean that you were not exposed; you can still develop COVID-19. Watch for [symptoms](#) for 14 days after travel, immediately [isolate](#) yourself if you develop symptoms, and [learn what to do if you are sick](#).

If your test is positive for COVID-19, immediately [isolate](#) yourself and follow [public health recommendations](#). **Do not travel until it is safe for you to be around others; this includes your return trip home.**

You may have been exposed to COVID-19 on your travels. You may feel well and not have any symptoms, but you can be contagious without symptoms and spread the virus to others. You and your travel companions (including [children](#)) pose a risk to your family, friends, and community for 14 days after you were exposed to the virus.

Regardless of where you traveled or what you did during your trip, take these everyday actions to protect others from getting COVID-19:

- [Stay at least 6 feet/2 meters](#) (about 2 arm lengths) from anyone who did not travel with you, particularly in crowded areas. It's important to do this everywhere — both indoors and outdoors.
- [Wear a mask](#) to keep your nose and mouth covered when you are in shared spaces outside of your home, including when using [public transportation](#).
- If there are people in the household who did not travel with you, [wear a mask](#) and ask everyone in the household to wear masks in shared spaces inside your home for 14 days after travel.
- [Wash your hands](#) often or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Watch your health: Look for [symptoms of COVID-19](#), and take your temperature if you feel sick.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Where do I get tested?

Visit your [state](#), [territorial](#), [tribal](#) and [local](#) [health department's website](#) to look for the latest information on where to get tested.

### What kind of test should I get?

You should get a viral test that can determine if you are currently infected with COVID-19. Learn more about [testing for a current infection](#).

### What else should I do before I travel to protect myself and others from COVID-19?

For 14 days before you travel, take [everyday precautions](#) like [wearing masks](#), [social distancing](#), and handwashing, and avoid the following activities that put you at higher risk for COVID-19:

- Going to a large social gathering like a wedding, funeral, or party.
- Attending a mass gathering like a sporting event, concert, or parade.
- Being in crowds like in restaurants, bars, fitness centers, or movie theaters.

- Taking public transportation like trains or buses or being in transportation hubs like airports.
- Traveling on a cruise ship or river boat.

## Is one test enough to prevent spread during my travel?

CDC recommends getting tested 1-3 days before your flight **AND** 3-5 days after your trip **AND** stay home for 7 days. 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 14 days. Getting tested in combination with staying home significantly reduces travelers' risk of spreading COVID-19.

## 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](#), travel with a copy of your test results and a letter from your doctor or health department that states you have been cleared for travel.

### More Information

- [Travel During COVID-19](#)
- [Testing for COVID-19](#)
- [Travel Planner](#)
- [Know When to Delay Your Travel](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions about Travel and COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Travel Recommendations by Destination](#)
- [Health Information for International Destinations](#)
- [Protect Yourself When Using Transportation](#)
- [Wear Face Masks on Public Transportation Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs](#)

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