

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expands COVID-19 negative test requirement to all passengers entering the United States by air

Testing passengers before and after travel is considered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to be a key measure to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, given the current pandemic situation in the United States.

Since several variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus continue to emerge worldwide, and there is evidence of increased transmissibility of some of them, mandatory testing of air passengers provides a means to slow the spread of the virus, while the vaccination campaign continues.

Prior to departure for the US, mandatory testing, integrated with CDC recommendations to get the test done again 3-5 days after arrival and to stay home for 7 days after travel, will help slow the spread of COVID-19 caused by passenger movements. Pre-departure testing will help identify infected travelers before they board planes: passengers planning to take a flight to the United States are required to undergo a viral test (a test that detects ongoing infection) within 3 days prior to the departure of their flight to the United States and give written documentation of the lab test result (paper or electronic copy), or documentation that they have recovered from the COVID-19 infection, to the airline company. If the airline confirms a negative test result or documentation of recovery, the passenger can board. In case the passenger does not provide documentation of a negative test or recovery, or chooses not to take the test, the boarding is denied.

CDC Director Robert R. Redfield signed the order on January 12, 2021 and will come into effect on January 26, 2021. CDC Director states that getting tested will not eliminate all the risk, but when the test is combined with a period of isolation at home and daily precautions such as wearing masks and keeping social distance, it can make travel safer, reducing the spread on planes, at airports and at destinations.

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These provisions are separate from visa application procedures, and all previous Presidential Proclamations limiting travels related to COVID-19 remain in effect, regardless of test results or vaccination status. Travelers with a National Interest Exception will continue to be subjected to all applicable pre-departure requirements.

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