

Emerald Spectrum Advisory

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What The New CDC Guidelines On COVID-19 And Travel Mean For You

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [has issued highly anticipated guidelines on domestic travel](#) for Americans who have been vaccinated against COVID-19, as well as for those who have not. And the new rules give a lot of clarity on what our summer plans might look like. Have you received the COVID-19 vaccine yet? Still waiting? Here's what the newest CDC recommendations mean for you depending on your situation.

If you've been fully vaccinated, it's generally safe to travel within the U.S.

People who have been fully vaccinated — meaning it has been two weeks since their second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines, or two weeks since they received the Johnson & Johnson shot — may “travel safely” within the United States, the health agency says. That's pretty big news, and also different than the recommendations up to this point. One major reason is that the agency is now quite confident that fully vaccinated travelers aren't just less likely to contract the coronavirus, but that they're also less likely to spread it. Earlier this week, health officials with the agency — relying on data from a new study that found the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines hold up extremely well in real-world settings — said that it is now [highly unlikely](#) that vaccinated people are able to carry and transmit the virus to those who have not yet been fully vaccinated.

You don't need to be tested for the coronavirus before or after traveling if you've had your shots.

According to the new CDC guidance, fully vaccinated people do *not* need to be tested before or after they travel, unless their destination requires it.

And that may continue to be the case in some places for a while, at least until local health officials adjust their policies based on the newest CDC recommendations.

You don't need to self-quarantine if you've been vaccinated.

The CDC previously recommended that people also isolate themselves for a number of days (which varied based on whether or not they were tested) after any travel.

That's no longer the case — again, unless the state, territorial or local health department at your destination requires it. (And it's your responsibility as a traveler to know those restrictions ahead of time.)

“Fully vaccinated travelers do not need to self-quarantine,” the CDC now says.

One important exception: If you notice that you develop any symptoms of COVID-19 after traveling, you should monitor them closely, isolate, and get tested. Although all three vaccines available in the U.S. have high efficacy rates — and are especially effective at preventing severe illness and death — breakthrough cases are still possible, and are even expected.

You *do* still need to wear a mask and social distance.

Even if you're fully vaccinated, you still need to wear a mask that covers your mouth and nose when you're traveling, including when you're on a plane, bus, train or any other form of public transportation, as well as when you're in a travel hub, like an airport or train station. Also, try to maintain physical distance from others to the extent it's possible. “Avoid crowds and stay at least 6 feet ... (about 2 arm lengths) from anyone who is not traveling with you,” the CDC says.

So, when you're boarding a plane, make sure to follow instructions from flight attendants and keep apart from others in line. You also should keep your mask on at all times while on the flight, unless you're removing it briefly to eat or drink.

This also applies to kids, who still have quite some time before they're eligible for vaccination. Children and adolescents tend to be at low risk for complications from COVID-19, but that's not the same as no risk. So it's important that they continue to take precautions, and that others do their part to help keep them safe.

All of that said, this doesn't mean everyone is free to resume pre-pandemic travel *quite* yet.

While all of this is good news, traveling should still be exercised with caution, [according to experts at the CDC](#). The fact is, the majority of Americans aren't fully vaccinated yet. And when more people travel more often, the

MIHAILOMILOVANOVIC VIA GETTY IMAGES The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued new guidelines on travel for vaccinated Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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number of interactions people from different households are having [will also increase](#). Many more people are being vaccinated, but at the same time experts are warning that the U.S. is on the precipice of a potential [fourth surge of the virus](#). It's confusing to make sense of those competing forces and narratives, but public health officials really urge people — even those who are fully vaccinated — to err on the side of caution.

And if you're not fully vaccinated, you should definitely still avoid traveling if you can.

Those who haven't been vaccinated against COVID-19 or who are only partially vaccinated — meaning you only had one shot or it hasn't been two weeks since your full dosage — should hold off on nonessential travel, the CDC says.

If you must travel, you should get tested for the virus one to three days before your trip, as well as three to five days after you return. In addition, it is important to self-quarantine for a full seven days. (Or 10 if you don't get tested.)

Also, all of the same safety precautions apply to you as well: Wear a mask, keep your distance, and wash your hands often.

Otherwise, just sit tight a little bit longer. The vaccination rollout continues to pick up speed and millions more shots are going into people's arms every day.

By Catherine Pearson
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Experts are still learning about COVID-19. The information in this story is what was known or available as of publication, but guidance can change as scientists discover more about the virus. Please [check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) for the most updated recommendations.