CDC Requires Negative COVID-19 Test for All Air Passengers Entering U.S.

Incoming passengers will need to show a negative test results within three days prior to departure.

January 17, 2021 By Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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CDC Expands Negative COVID-19 Test Requirement to All Air Passengers Entering the United States

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is expanding the requirement for a negative COVID-19 test to all air passengers entering the United States. Testing before and after travel is a critical layer to slow the introduction and spread of COVID-19. This strategy is consistent with the current phase of the pandemic and more efficiently protects the health of Americans.

Variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus continue to emerge in countries around the world, and there is evidence of increased transmissibility of some of these variants. With the US already in surge status, the testing requirement for air passengers will help slow the spread of the virus as we work to vaccinate the American public.

Before departure to the United States, a required test, combined with the CDC recommendations to get tested again 3-5 days after arrival and stay home for 7 days post-travel, will help slow the spread of COVID-19 within US communities from travel-related infections. Pre-departure testing with results known and acted upon before travel begins will help identify infected travelers before they board airplanes.

Air passengers are required to get a viral test (a test for current infection) within the 3 days before their flight to the U.S. departs, and provide written documentation of their laboratory test result (paper or electronic copy) to the airline or provide documentation of having recovered from COVID-19.

Airlines must confirm the negative test result for all passengers or documentation of recovery before they board. If a passenger does not provide documentation of a negative test or recovery, or chooses not to take a test, the airline must deny boarding to the passenger.

“Testing does not eliminate all risk,” says CDC Director Robert R. Redfield, MD, “but when combined with a period of staying at home and everyday precautions like wearing masks and

social distancing, it can make travel safer, healthier, and more responsible by reducing spread on planes, in airports, and at destinations."

This order was signed by the CDC Director on January 12, 2021 and will become effective on January 26, 2021.

This media statement was published on the CDC website on January 12, 2021.

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