

## Is It Safe to Fly In Summer 2020? Here's What You Need to Know Before You Board

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If you're like most people, you're probably pretty tired of staying at home these days. Maybe you've been fantasizing about a full-fledged vacation, or maybe you just want a change of scenery. Either way, if you've done some searching on the internet lately, you might have noticed something — flight prices are down! But does that mean it's safe to fly during the summer of 2020? Or beyond?

The answer is — you can travel, but you are putting yourself and others at risk by doing so. And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) isn't splitting any hairs over this. Its answers for “Can traveling to visit family or friends increase my chances of getting and spreading COVID-19?”; “Should I avoid traveling internationally?”; “Can flying on an airplane increase my risk of getting COVID-19?”; and “Should I delay going on a cruise?” are all “Yes.”

This doesn't necessarily mean traveling is out of the question this summer. It just means you should be aware of the increased risk if you do choose to fly, and you should be proactive about minimizing that risk.

Certain airline companies are already doing what they can to keep airplanes as safe as possible. Many aircrafts are fitted with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters, which clean the circulating air and remove infectious particles. American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, and United Airlines have all announced they are fogging airplane interiors as well. Fogging is a technique that involves spraying a disinfectant on the surfaces inside the cabin, killing germs (including

coronaviruses). And some airlines (such as American Airlines and Delta Air Lines) are also making it easier to maintain social distancing by spacing out seat assignments (such as leaving the middle seat open) or limiting the number of passengers on each flight.

That being said, there's a lot about traveling that simply can't be changed. A trip to the airport typically involves waiting in at least two or three lines in close contact with others. Every surface you touch — whether it's an escalator handle, security bin, or bathroom fixture — is frequently touched by other people as well. And even with seat spacing, you may still be sitting within 6 feet of others on the airplane for several hours at a time. In fact, there are reports that some flights are still very full, since flight cancellations have limited the overall number of flights and caused passengers to crowd onto the few that remain.

Knowing all of this, you may decide you want to travel this summer anyway. Or, maybe you're one of the many Americans whose job relies on traveling. Either way, here are some tips for your next trip to the airport:

### **Pay attention to travel restrictions**

Especially if you are leaving the country, make sure travel is actually allowed to your destination. Each country sets its own rules regarding who is allowed to travel in and out — so don't assume you know the answer just because you checked the travel restrictions imposed by the United States. If you are headed overseas, check your destination's travel website or government website for any COVID-19-related updates.

You should also check to see if you'll be able to travel back to the United States or if you'll be required to quarantine for 14 days upon your arrival. Currently, [travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov) has information specific to travel from Brazil, Europe, and China as well as information for cruise ship passengers and students who are studying abroad.

### **Anticipate your travel needs ahead of time**

From the moment you leave your house to the moment you return, you should be thinking of ways to minimize your interactions with others. Be sure to pack enough clothes, medications, and toiletries to last the length of your trip (so you don't have to go shopping). You may also want to bring your own food to eat at the airport and on the airplane.

### **Keep in mind that usual TSA rules are still in place**

You should keep hand sanitizer with you at all times for whenever you can't wash your hands with soap and water. While the TSA usually restricts liquids to 3.4 oz bottles, it is making an exception for hand sanitizers during the pandemic. Until further notice, passengers are allowed to bring up to 12 oz of hand sanitizer in their carry ons. However, longer wait times can be expected if you do this in order to properly screen large liquids.

### **Wear a cloth face covering**

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, you should wear a cloth face covering at all times. In fact, many airline companies are requiring this. Make sure you have one that is comfortable (e.g., doesn't pull on your ears too hard) and that is easy to breathe through, since you may be wearing it for several hours on the airplane as well as in the airport.

### **Be aware that you may be spreading the virus to others**

Safe traveling isn't only about protecting yourself, it's about protecting others and limiting the spread of COVID-19. Remember, even if you don't have symptoms, you may be carrying the virus and you are a potential danger to the people around you. One of the problems with traveling is that individuals can be vectors of disease, carrying the virus from one place to another. During your travels, be mindful about who you visit and what you do. If possible, minimize contact with people in high-risk groups, including people age 65 and older. And if you develop a fever or any symptoms before you leave, strongly consider canceling your trip altogether.

### **Look into whether or not you can change existing plans**

If you have a previously scheduled trip but think flying at a different time or to a different location may be better, look into your airline's specific policies. Many companies are waiving change fees and cancellation fees in the wake of COVID-19.