

January 13, 2021

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

On Tuesday, January 12, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) announced that it is expanding the requirement for a negative COVID-19 test to all international air passengers entering the United States. The new rule will go into effect on January 26, 2021.

The CDC will require that all passengers:

- Receive a viral test (a test for current infection) within three 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.
  - Previously infected passengers can provide documentation of their recovery in lieu of a negative test result.

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.

In addition, the CDC is recommending that passengers receive a COVID-19 test three to five days after arrival and to stay home for at least a week.

“Testing does not eliminate all risks,” 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 the spread on planes, in airports, and at destinations.”

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An airline industry group has expressed support for the new measure. Airlines for America, a U.S. trade group, said that “a well-planned program focused on increasing testing of travelers to the United States will further these objectives in a much more effective way than the blanket travel restrictions currently in place,” according to an internal source.

The new rule is similar to one put in place last month for passengers from the UK to the U.S., which requires that passengers test negative for COVID-19 within three days of boarding their flight. For the UK requirement that went through last month, airlines can be subject to criminal penalties if they fail to comply, and passengers can be subject to criminal penalties if they willfully give false or misleading information.

### **Related People**

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