

**Phase Two Guidance**  
**Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Travel**

During Phase Two, **non-essential travel outside of the National Capital Region remains discouraged**. As travel increases your chances of getting infected and spreading COVID-19, staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others from getting sick.

Please note that **any individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, should not travel** due to the risk of exposing others. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.

In accordance with Mayor's Order 2020-054, dated March 30, 2020, "**essential travel**" is defined as:

- Travel related to the provision of, or access to, Essential Activities, Essential Governmental Functions, Essential Businesses, or Minimum Basic Operations, including travel to and from work to operate Essential Businesses or maintain Essential Governmental Functions;
- Travel to care for elderly, minors, dependents, persons with disabilities, or other vulnerable persons;
- Travel required to visit a house of worship;
- Travel to attend a family funeral;
- Travel for a family emergency;
- Travel to or from educational institutions for purposes of receiving materials for distance learning, for receiving meals, and any other related services;
- For those commuting to and from the District for essential activities, travel for residents to return to a place of residence in Washington, DC and for non-residents to return to their place of residence outside Washington, DC;
- Travel required by law enforcement or court order; and
- Travel within the National Capital Region.
- Examples of non-essential travel include vacations, school trips, youth sports tournaments or work conferences.

On November 6, 2020, Mayor Bowser issued [Mayor's Order 2020-110](#) constituting a revised travel advisory with change from a quarantine-based travel strategy to a **test-based travel strategy**. The current widespread availability of COVID-19 testing has made this a reasonable approach.

**Please note:** The use of the word "quarantine" in this guidance refers only to quarantine in the setting of **high-risk travel**. The revised test-based Travel Order is under no circumstances to be interpreted as a way to "test out of quarantine" for individuals directed to quarantine due to a known exposure to a person with COVID-19. Individuals quarantining because of a known exposure must complete a full 14- day quarantine period and follow all instructions outlined in *Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

### Consider the following when contemplating travel:

- Consider whether the risks of travel for yourself and others outweigh the benefit of that travel.
- If COVID-19 is spreading where you are going, you can get infected while traveling and spread it to members of your household when you return.
- If COVID-19 is still spreading in your community, you can potentially spread the virus to others while traveling, even if you don't have symptoms.
- Older adults or people with underlying health conditions are **at an increased risk for complications** from COVID-19 and should be cautious.
- If you have symptoms or have been a close contact of someone with COVID-19, do not travel.
  - **Close contact** is defined as having spent a cumulative total of at least fifteen (15) minutes within six (6) feet of someone over a twenty-four (24) hour period.

### Certain risks are associated with various travel methods:

- Air travel: Air travel requires spending time in security lines and airport terminals, which can bring you in close contact with other people and frequently touched surfaces. Most viruses and other germs do not spread easily on flights because of how air circulates and is filtered on airplanes. However, social distancing is difficult on crowded flights, and you may have to sit near others (within 6 feet), sometimes for hours, increasing risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Bus or train travel: Traveling on buses or trains for any length of time can involve sitting or standing within 6 feet of others.
- Car travel: Making stops along the way for gas, food, or bathroom breaks can put you and your traveling companions in close contact with other people and as well as into contact with potentially contaminated surfaces.
- Cruise ships: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently recommends that travelers defer all cruise travel worldwide.

### For visitors coming into DC:

These requirements apply to anyone traveling into Washington, DC from a state with a running seven (7) day average COVID-19 rate of more than 10 cases per 100,000 people or a country with a Level 3 (high risk) Travel Health Notice for COVID-19 on the Centers for Disease Control website. For an updated list of states exempt from these requirements see [coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo). For Travel Health Notices see the CDC website [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notices.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notices.html).

Travelers should take the following steps before visiting DC:

- Within 72 hours before travelling, visitors should **get a COVID-19 test**.
  - A PCR test is preferred over an antigen test for COVID-19 if the traveler does not have symptoms.
  - Travel should not take place until the test result returns negative.
    - Do not travel while test results are pending.
    - If the test result is positive, isolate. Do not travel.
- Do NOT travel if you are a close contact of a confirmed positive case of COVID-19.
- Travel by private vehicle is strongly encouraged.
- If you are visiting DC for more than 3 days, you must limit activities until a second test is obtained 3-5 days after your arrival and returns negative.

- If traveler tests positive while in DC, they must complete their isolation before traveling home, and any close contacts must complete the 14-day quarantine.
- All visitors shall self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 during their visit.
  - If symptoms develop, isolate and get tested.
  - If the test returns negative, continue with planned activities.
  - If the test is positive, isolate.
- District officials engaged in COVID-19 investigation efforts, such as contact tracing, enforcements, or inspections may request the negative test results. Visitors who do not produce this must self-quarantine for 14 days.
- Private institutions, such as universities, employers, hotels, hospitals, congregate care facilities, and houses of worship may ask visitors about their recent travel and may require a record of a negative COVID-19 test before allowing admittance to their facility.
  - Visitors who cannot or do not provide such proof must self-quarantine for
  - fourteen (14) days after arrival in the District.
  - Institutions may also enforce other rules, such as mandatory quarantine for travelers, as deemed necessary.
- Exceptions to the requirement for testing include:
  - Visitors from Maryland and Virginia (provided they have not travelled to a high-risk area within the last 14 days prior to travel to DC)
  - Visitors who are coming into DC for less than 24 hours.
  - Visitors who only passed through a high-risk area in transit to DC (e.g., through an airport or by car), provided that they did not participate in social activities or high-risk behavior while in transit.
- In addition:
  - People coming to DC for essential work may carry out those duties prior to receiving results from their second test in DC (provided they do not have any symptoms of COVID-19, a COVID-19 test result pending, or exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the last 14 days)
    - **NOTE:** If the essential worker has more than 1 week notice of their trip to DC, they are required to obtain a test prior to travelling.
  - People travelling to DC for a family emergency or a funeral do not need to obtain a negative test result prior to coming if this would be impractical, but they must restrict their activities to only those directly related to the purpose of the emergency travel.
  - Persons who regularly travel to the District from places outside Maryland, Virginia, or a low risk state or country, should also periodically be tested for COVID-19, even if some of their trips are less than 24 hours long.

### **For DC residents:**

DC residents returning home to the District after travelling to a place other than Maryland, Virginia or a low risk state or country must either:

- Limit daily activities for 14 days upon returning.  
OR
- Limit daily activities and get tested for COVID-19 within 3-5 days after returning to DC.
  - If you are experiencing symptoms, isolate at home until test results return.
  - The recommendation to quarantine while test results are pending still applies.
- DC residents should self-monitor for symptoms for COVID-19 for 14 days after travel, and isolate and seek testing if they develop symptoms.

- These requirements do not apply to those traveling to perform essential work, while they are working or engaging in essential activities (e.g., obtaining food, medical care or medications). They must limit activities when they are not at work until the 14-day period is over or they receive a negative COVID-19 test result.
- Institutions/employers may also enforce other rules, such as mandatory quarantine for travelers, as deemed necessary.
- While travel to and from Maryland and Virginia is exempt, carefully consider non-essential travel to regions and vacation destinations in those states which may be higher risk than other areas of the states.

#### **Limiting Activities and Self-Monitoring:**

- Self-monitoring includes checking your temperature with a thermometer twice a day and monitoring for any symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19. Use a log to document your temperature and if symptoms are present.
- For visitors, limit activities to the primary purpose of your visit until the testing requirements have been met and test results have come back negative. Avoid public settings as much as possible.
- For DC residents returning after travel: Limit activities by leaving your home only when necessary, avoiding public gatherings (of any size), and social distancing from others who didn't travel, including in your household. This should be followed until testing requirements are met and test results have come back as negative.

#### **If you develop symptoms:**

- Isolate yourself from others.
- Consult with a healthcare provider and seek testing. Call ahead and let them know your symptoms.
- Only leave your lodging/home for essential purposes, such as seeking healthcare/testing.
- Call 911 if you have a medical emergency such as difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, or inability to arouse, bluish lips or face.
- If you need a COVID-19 test, information on options for COVID-19 testing are available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/testing](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/testing).
- For more information about what to do if you are diagnosed with COVID-19 see *Guidance for Persons who Tested Positive for COVID-19* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

#### **Anticipate travel needs to decrease exposures:**

- Bring enough medicine for the entire trip.
- Pack enough alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) and keep it with you.
- Bring a cloth face covering to wear in public places, including outdoor areas where it is difficult to maintain social distancing.
- Prepare food and water for your trip. Pack non-perishable food in case restaurants and stores are closed.
- If you clean your travel lodgings, see the CDC's guidance on cleaning and disinfection [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html#clean-disinfect](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html#clean-disinfect).

**Follow state and local travel restrictions:**

- For up-to-date information and travel guidance, check the state or local health department where you are, along your route, and at your planned destination. A list of state and territorial health department websites can be found on the CDC website: [cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/healthdepartments.html](https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/healthdepartments.html).
- While you are traveling, it is possible a state or local government may put into place travel restrictions, such as stay-at-home or shelter-in-place orders, mandated quarantines upon arrival, or even state border closures. Check for updates as you travel.

**For international travel:**

- Be aware of travel restrictions that may be in place prohibiting non-residents from entering or requiring self-isolation for visitors.
- Restrictions for visitors change frequently. It is important to know what restrictions are in place before planning and departing for international destinations.
- Note that if you do travel abroad, there is no guarantee you will be able to return due to potential for changing travel restrictions and interruptions.

These recommendations will continue to be updated. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov) regularly for the most current information.