

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

During Phase Two, **non-essential travel outside of the National Capital Region (defined as DC, MD, and VA) remains discouraged.** Because 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 the following persons **should not travel** due to the risk of exposing others:

- Persons who are diagnosed with COVID-19 and in their isolation period
- Persons experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
- Persons who are a close contact of a person with COVID-19 and requiring quarantine

For more information see *Guidance for Quarantine after COVID-19 Exposure*, *Guidance for Persons Who Tested Positive for COVID-19*, and *Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19* at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

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.

**Definitions**

***Essential travel:***

- 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
- Travel within the National Capital Region
- Examples of non-essential travel include vacations, school trips, youth sports tournaments or work conferences.

***High-risk travel:***

- Travel to or from any state or country that has a running 7- day average COVID-19 rate over 10 cases per 100,000 persons (as per Mayor's Order 2020-110 issued 11/6/2020). The current list of low-risk states can be found at [coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo).

- Travel to or from a country with a Level 2,3 or 4 Travel Health Notice for COVID-19 on the CDC website. For Travel Health Notices see the CDC website [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html).
- Virginia and Maryland are exempt from travel restrictions.

**Close contact:** Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes (cumulatively) over a 24-hour period, starting from 2 days before illness onset (or for asymptomatic infected people, 2 days prior to positive test collection) until the time the infected person is isolated.

### Visitors coming into DC (high-risk travel)

#### Travelers who 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.
- 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 10-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 quarantine for 10 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 quarantine for 10 days after arrival in the District.
  - Institutions may also enforce other rules, such as mandatory quarantine for travelers, as deemed necessary.
- Please note:
  - 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.
  - 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 (high-risk travel)

- DC residents do not need to secure a negative test for COVID-19 prior to returning home.

### DC residents should take the following steps after returning to DC:

- Limit daily activities for 10 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 who perform essential work may carry out those duties and engage in essential activities (e.g., obtaining food, medical care, or medications) prior to receiving results from their COVID-19 test, unless otherwise indicated by their employer. They must limit activities when they are not at work until the 10-day period is over or they receive a negative COVID-19 test result.
  - DC residents should continue to self-monitor for symptoms for COVID-19 for 14 days after travel even after a negative test result, and isolate and seek testing if they develop symptoms.
  - 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 neighboring 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).

### Travel Related Quarantine and Testing Requirements Exemptions

#### Travel- related testing and quarantine requirements may be waived if an individual:

- Has **tested positive for COVID-19** within the last 90 days **AND** does not have any symptoms consistent with COVID-19  
**OR**
- Is **fully vaccinated** against COVID-19 **AND** is within 90 days of the last dose in the COVID-19 vaccine series **AND** does not have any symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
  - A person is considered fully vaccinated 14 days after completion of a COVID-19 vaccination series (after the second dose of a 2-dose series, or after one dose of a single-dose vaccine).
  - It is recommended to bring your vaccination card with you while travelling in case documentation is requested.

#### Travel-related testing and quarantine requirements are also waived for visitors coming into DC:

- from Maryland and Virginia (provided they have not travelled to a high-risk area within the last 14 days prior to travel to DC),
- for less than 24 hours  
**OR**
- who merely passed through a high-risk area in transit to DC (e.g., through an airport or by car), provided they did not participate in social activities or high-risk behavior while in transit.
- Note: Visitors travelling to DC for a family funeral or family emergency 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 activities directly related to the purpose of the emergency travel.

### Additional Travel Information

#### Considerations when Planning 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.
- Visit the *CDC Travel Planner* website ([cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-planner/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-planner/index.html)) and *Travel Recommendations by Destination* ([cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html)) to get important information about COVID-19 restrictions by destination before traveling.
- Your activities during travel will greatly affect your risk. In general, outside activities are much safer than indoor activities. Activities with household members are much safer than activities with persons from many households.
- You may also wish to consider the hospital capacity of your destination. In some places, hospital capacity is strained due to COVID-19 cases.

**Risks Associated with 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.

**Anticipate Travel Needs to Decrease Exposures:**

- Bring enough medicine for the entire trip.
- Pack alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) and keep it with you.
- Bring cloth face coverings or masks 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://www.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.