



TRAVEL GUIDELINES

COVID-19 TRAVEL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

GENERAL

Reference the MCC COVID-19 Policy and Procedure for general information and safety guidelines related to COVID-19. An individual's safety, health, and hygiene are in large part the responsibility of the individual. Take the time to study and understand the importance of these guidelines and precautions to maintain your safety, health, and hygiene as well as that of those around you.

Preventative Maintenance

Maintain a healthy lifestyle in order to reduce risk of complications from viral exposure. Exercise regularly, maintain a balanced diet, limit consumption of sugar, limit consumption of alcohol, and supplement your diet with vitamins. Regularly visit your primary care physician, dentist, eye doctor, and dermatologist for routine check-ups and exams. Proactively monitor your health to understand your physiology and risk factors.

Have Vaccinations Up-to-Date

While there is no vaccine for COVID-19, having all other essential vaccinations up-to-date will help you stay healthy and prevent your immune system from being compromised.

AIR TRAVEL

Wash Hands Regularly

If soap and water are not available to clean your hands, use a hand sanitizer which is at least 60% alcohol. Experts agree that good old-fashioned hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (which is the time it takes to sing 'Happy Birthday' to yourself twice) is the best defense, and caution that constant use of hand sanitizer can irritate your skin.

Practice Good Hygiene

Respiratory diseases like COVID-19 spread through droplets of saliva or mucus, usually when people cough or sneeze, then others come in contact with the droplets. Avoid touching your own eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands, as viruses most frequently enter the body through these routes.

If You're Unwell, Don't Travel

COVID-19 appears to have an incubation period of at least 14 days, unlike regular flu which is 2 days. An increasing number of international airports are conducting temperature checks for arriving, departing and transiting passengers, so there's the chance that you could be denied boarding for having a fever unrelated to COVID-19. Protect yourself, and other travelers, by not flying when you're sick.



Cover Up

Cover your mouth and nose when you cough, sneeze into your elbow, and wear a facemask to protect your fellow travelers. It is highly recommended that you wear safety goggles along with the standard PPE equipment while on flights. While it is not the most common way of contracting COVID-19, it is possible to contract the virus through your eyes if they are exposed to the virus. If you begin to feel sick while at work, go home as soon as possible.

Clean Up

While many airlines have announced an extra plane cleaning, there is no guarantee that every surface will get the full treatment. Carry antibacterial wipes to clean your seat armrest, tray table, seat-back pocket, air vent, seat touch screen, headrest, and window blind. The same advice is sensible for other items or areas frequently used by air travelers, including TSA checkpoint bins, airport furniture, stair and escalator handrails, elevator pads, newsstand counters, cooler handles, self-service kiosks, card swipe devices, restroom handles and accessories, and restroom surfaces.

Self Service

Avoid contact with common spaces such as restaurants, newsstands, and markets. Prepare for your trip by packing your own food, entertainment, and personal effects to the greatest extent possible.

Breathe Easy

Almost all modern aircrafts have HEPA (High Efficiency Particle Arrester) filters that will filter 99.999% of dust particles and airborne contaminants such as viruses and bacteria, ensuring the highest possible quality of cabin air. However, infection specialists suggest a window seat, away from passenger foot traffic, could offer you a bit more protection.

Stay Clear of People with a Cough or Cold

Experts define exposure as being within 6 feet of an infected person for 10 minutes or more. On aircraft, the World Health Organization defines contact with an infected person as being seated within two rows of one another. But also remember that passengers walk around, go to the bathroom, and touch many surfaces.

Counteract Low Humidity

The low humidity in aircraft cabins dries out the mucous membranes of your eyes, nose and mouth, making them less effective in blocking viruses. For this reason, some frequent flyers swear by nasal sprays to moisturize and clean out the nose. Also drink more water to compensate for the cabin dryness. However, new generation long haul aircraft such as the Boeing 787 Dreamliner feature technology that allows for higher humidity levels.

Stay Up-to-Date with Travel Advice

If traveling internationally, make sure to check the US State Department website for the latest information and advice. FCM customers can also use FCM Secure - our online global security tracking and reporting tool - to keep track of health advisories issued by WorldAware and to locate travelers.



Stay Up to Date with Travel Advisories

<https://www.tsa.gov/coronavirus>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

RENTAL CARS, RIDESHARE, & PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

If you're planning to rent a car right now, take these steps to practice an abundance of caution:

- Always self-park the car. Avoiding valet service will help limit your contact with others.
- Keep the windows open so that air can circulate inside the car. If you use the air conditioner, keep the external air circulation function activated.
- Before you reschedule or cancel a reservation, check your rental car company's current policy. Many companies are relaxing their policies (more on that below) during this time and their flexibility may suit your changing needs.
- Always follow the travel-related guidelines released by local authorities.

How Coronaviruses Can Spread in Vehicles

The problem with cars is that their interiors normally contain many different kinds of surfaces, from leather and metal to rubber and plastic. The virus can spread while sharing airspace with an infected person, the surfaces the person touched, or even the airspace after an infected passenger has left. Numerous studies are being conducted, but some of the early [reports](#) suggest that the virus can persist in the air for up to three hours and for two to three days on stainless steel and plastic surfaces. Another [study](#) on a related coronavirus that causes SARS found that the virus can survive on "inanimate surfaces like metal, glass or plastic for up to nine days

Have the Right Tools

While there isn't yet a vaccine for COVID-19 in people, the good news is that it is possible to disinfect and kill the virus on external surfaces. There are several ways to prepare your vehicle to be especially clean and safe during the outbreak. Experts recommend using disposable gloves while cleaning or dedicating reusable gloves for COVID-19 disinfection purposes only.

Most common EPA-registered household disinfectants will work. Here is an approved list of effective cleaners, but be sure to read the labels to make sure the cleaner is safe to use on the different surfaces in your vehicle. We recommend keeping a tube of disinfectant wipes in the vehicle as an easy and effective preventive measure.

The CDC has [recommendations](#) for homemade bleach and alcohol solutions given that many brand-name disinfectants have been in short supply.



Focus on Common Vehicle Touchpoints

You'll want to clean the places you come into contact with the most. Besides the obvious places such as a door handle, key fob or steering wheel, the most important part of the interior to keep clean is the dashboard, according to [Charles P. Gerba](#), a professor of microbiology and public health at the University of Arizona. "That's the worst site in terms of total number of bacteria," Gerba said. "Air is constantly being sucked over and circulated inside the car."

Other places to clean include the inside door buttons, seat belts, gear shifters and touchscreens. How often should you do this? While your individual circumstances with your vehicle will vary, the CDC recommends cleaning and disinfecting touched surfaces daily.

The outside of the car is less susceptible to carrying the virus, said Gerba. That's because the sun and outside weather can shorten its life span. However, it is still a good idea to clean door handles and other exterior touch points. Gas pump handles and keypads at gas stations are also locations to be wary of.

There's a chance that some of the harsher disinfectants can dry out the leather in your vehicle. In this case, you might want to use a milder solution of soap and water and occasionally combine it with a leather conditioner. Soap won't kill the germs, but it lowers their numbers and reduces the risk of spreading infection.

Children and the Elderly in Vehicles

People over the age of 60 and those with underlying conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease and cancer have the highest risk of severe disease and death from COVID-19, according to the [WHO](#).

Early studies from the WHO have shown that the disease is rare and mild in children. But kids are often unsuspecting carriers of infection, due to their lack of awareness of personal hygiene. They are more likely to spread it to parents and relatives than become sick themselves.

One common scenario that could cause concern, Gerba said, is a driver who regularly drives children to and from school and may also have elderly people as passengers. Without proper cleaning, the virus can spread to the elderly passengers even if the children are not riding in the vehicle at the same time.

"If you're over 60, or particularly 80, I would take extra precaution," he said. "Wipe it down, especially high-touch areas like seat belts and window buttons."

Car Rentals, Ride-Sharing and Taxis

Anything that comes into contact with a number of people can be a potential source of infection. Car rentals are one that people might not have considered. Certain companies are taking extra steps. In a statement, the rental company Budget pledged to "enhance the techniques used to clean our vehicles after each rental."

In separate statements, Uber and Lyft said they will temporarily suspend the accounts of both drivers and riders if the companies are notified that those users are feeling sick. Both companies are providing drivers with disinfectant, though supplies are limited.

KidsAndCars.org, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting children in motor vehicles, recommends avoiding ride-hailing services completely if possible. If not, passengers should try to refrain from touching surfaces and avoid touching their faces.

Drivers and passengers both should carry hand sanitizer for frequent use, Gerba said. Portable disinfectant wipes help as well. In a situation where riders are consistently getting in and out of shared vehicles, "that's about the best you can do," he said.

Public Transportation

To prevent the spread of the disease, riders of public transportation such as buses and trains should wash their hands and practice social distancing, according to the American Public Transportation Association. Many transportation agencies pledged to install additional sanitizing stations and encouraged riders to remain at least 3-6 feet away from one another.

Wipe down areas that you will immediately come into contact with, such as rails, grab handles and seats. Some people use this procedure on planes, but it may be helpful for public transit as well. If this is too much trouble, just be sure to keep your hands away from your face, use hand sanitizer, and wash your hands frequently.

"Good hygiene remains the best defense against COVID-19," Patrick Warren, chief safety officer for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in New York City, said in a [statement](#). "We also ask our customers to redouble their hygiene efforts, stay home if you are sick, and follow the messaging we have up at our stations."

HOTEL STAYS

According to research by the U.S. government, the novel [coronavirus](#) can live as long as three days on some surfaces, making wiping down touch points a good preventative measure.

Some spaces in hotels, like the lobby, where credit cards are being exchanged and counters are being touched, are almost impossible to wipe down on your own. There are, however, other potentially contaminated places.

Wash your hands. Prior to entering your room, you probably touched doorknobs, elevator buttons and maybe even took public transit. All of these touch points are places where germs may linger.

Hand washing remains the best documented defense for infection prevention. Remember to pack your own disinfecting wipes. Consider packing your own pillow, since hotel pillows could be full of allergens and residual saliva.

The Guest Room

Your hotel room should be clean and tidy upon arrival, but that does not mean the housekeepers did a deep clean of all the surfaces. To be safe, use disinfecting wipes and focus on disinfecting the surfaces that are known for being the germiest, such as the remote control, light switches, bedside lamp switches, the alarm clock, the phone, cabinet and drawer handles, doorknobs and locks, desk surfaces and information booklets or brochures — essentially any surface that is frequently touched. Also consider things that are in your possession that you regularly touch while touching other things in the room such as your mobile phone.

Assume that the previous hotel guest in your room was sick; it can help focus your attention on a thorough cleaning with the disinfecting wipes.

Travelers should clean their room's touch points with 70-percent-alcohol disinfecting wipes. Single-use items that are sealed, such as mini bar drinks, are not as concerning; however, it is recommended you travel with a personal water bottle and mug to avoid using potentially infected glassware.

Comforters are typically washed on occasion, but rarely between guests. Various reports suggest that hotel comforters may only be washed four times a year. Cleanliness of the comforter is obviously questionable. It is recommended travelers remove the comforter to avoid potential contact with lingering bodily fluids that can harbor germs. Consider packing a blanket or warm pajamas as well as your own pillow.

The Bathroom

The same tips for sanitizing a hotel room go for its bathroom. Clean its surfaces, faucets and handles before using, and avoid using the glasses. Keep toiletries inside of a toiletry bag instead of unpacking them onto a towel on the counter.

The Fitness Center and Pool

These areas are common spaces with high traffic and a high number of touch points. It would be inefficient to attempt disinfecting all touch points prior to use. These areas should be avoided for the time being, and alternatives considered such as exercising outdoors.

The Hotel Restaurant

Exercise caution when eating at hotel restaurants and avoid communal serving areas, such as buffets, all together. If you do visit the restaurant for a la carte service, consider wiping down the utensils and bringing your own bottled beverage.