

CDC requires wearing of face masks while on public transportation and at transportation hubs

Press Release

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As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to surge in the United States, CDC is implementing provisions of President Biden's Executive Order on Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel and will require the wearing of masks by all travelers into, within, or out of the United States, e.g., on airplanes, ships, ferries, trains, subways, buses, taxis, and ride-shares. The mask requirement also applies to travelers in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and seaports; train, bus, and subway stations; and any other areas that provide transportation. Transportation operators must require all persons onboard to wear masks when boarding, disembarking, and for the duration of travel. Operators of transportation hubs must require all persons to wear a mask when entering or on the premises of a transportation hub.

This action is to further prevent spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 and to further support state and local health authorities, transportation partners, and conveyance operators to keep passengers, employees, and communities safe.

Today's order from CDC is part of a comprehensive, science-driven, U.S. government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. One component of the whole-of-government response is taking actions related to reducing virus spread through travel. Transmission of the virus through travel has led to—and continues to lead to—interstate and international spread of the virus.

"America's transportation systems are essential," said CDC Director Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH. "Given how interconnected most transportation systems are across our nation and the world, when infected persons travel on public conveyances without wearing a mask and with others who are not wearing masks, the risk of interstate and international transmission can grow quickly."

Traveling on public transportation increases a person's risk of getting and spreading COVID-19 by bringing people in close contact with others, often for prolonged periods, and exposing them to frequently touched surfaces. Face masks help prevent people who have COVID-19, including those who are pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic, from spreading the virus to others. Masks also help protect the wearer by reducing the chance they will breathe in respiratory droplets carrying the virus.

"CDC recommends that non-essential travel be avoided; however, for those who must travel, additional measures are being put in place to help prevent the spread of the virus," said Dr. Walensky. "Masks are most likely to reduce the spread of COVID-19 when they are widely and consistently used by all people in public settings."

This order will be effective on February 2, 2021. For more information on the Order or to view frequently asked questions, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/masks/mask-travel-guidance.html>

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