

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL FAQs

WHAT IS THE NEW POLICY IN A NUTSHELL?

Beginning November 8, all adult foreign nationals traveling to the U.S. will be required to be fully vaccinated before boarding their flight. This is in addition to the current requirement that travelers show proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of departure to the U.S.

Once the vaccination requirement is put in place, the White House will ease all the country-specific restrictions on international travel that have prevented noncitizens who have been in the United Kingdom, European Union, China, India, Iran, Republic of Ireland, Brazil or South Africa in the prior 14 days from entering the U.S.

WILL THERE BE ANY EXEMPTIONS FOR UNVACCINATED FOREIGN NATIONALS?

There will be very few exemptions for unvaccinated foreign nationals to enter the U.S. The limited exemptions will likely include children under the age of 12, COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial participants, and those traveling for certain humanitarian purposes. Unvaccinated foreign nationals who receive an exemption may have to agree to be vaccinated upon arrival.

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT FULLY VACCINATED AMERICANS?

Fully vaccinated Americans will only need to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of departure to the U.S. The CDC will require airlines to collect contact tracing information from fully vaccinated U.S. citizens and permanent residents arriving back in the U.S.

WHAT ABOUT UNVACCINATED AMERICANS?

U.S. citizens and permanent residents who are not fully vaccinated will still be able to fly to the U.S., but they will see tougher testing and contact tracing protocols. They will need to be tested within 24 hours of boarding a flight to the U.S., as well as undergo testing upon return to the country. It remains to be seen, though, how the federal government will enforce the testing requirement upon return.

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT CHILDREN?

The new U.S. policy only requires adult foreign nationals to be fully vaccinated in order to enter the U.S. The White House did not immediately say whether unvaccinated children will face different testing protocols when flying into the country.

WHICH VACCINES ARE ACCEPTABLE?

The CDC says the U.S. will accept full vaccination of travelers with any COVID-19 vaccine approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization, including those from Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson used in the U.S. Other vaccines are also approved by the WHO and used widely around the world, including from AstraZeneca and China's Sinovac and Sinopharm, with varying degrees of effectiveness against COVID-19 and its more transmissible delta variant. The WHO is reviewing Russia's Sputnik V vaccine but hasn't approved it.

WILL AIRLINES COLLECT DATA ON PASSENGERS?

The CDC will require airlines to collect information about passengers and provide it to the health agency if it needs to conduct contact tracing.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL FAQs

WHAT ABOUT TRAVEL OVER LAND BORDERS?

Also starting on November 8, foreign nationals crossing the land borders with Canada and Mexico or arriving in the United States by passenger ferry for non-essential reasons, such as to visit friends or family or for tourism, will be required to be fully vaccinated. These travelers are required to be prepared to attest to vaccination status and to present proof of vaccination to a CBP officer upon request. By January, foreign nationals traveling across the land border for both essential and non-essential reasons will be required to be fully vaccinated.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY?

Analysts and industry officials think it will help. Prior to the announcement, the U.S. was on pace to lose \$175 billion in export income from international visitors this year, according to the U.S. Travel Association.

HOW HAVE THE CURRENT RESTRICTIONS AFFECTED INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL?

They have made it easier for Americans to visit Europe than the other way around. U.S. international travel in August was down 54% compared with two years ago, and arrivals by non-U.S. citizens were off 74%, according to Airlines for America.

HOW WILL THE CHANGES AFFECT BUSINESS TRAVEL?

There is pent-up demand among business travelers from Europe. Beginning November 8, foreign executives from previously restricted countries will no longer have to seek a National Interest Exemption to prove that their travel to the United States serves the U.S. “national interest — a time-consuming process.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

There are several unanswered questions and details that will need to be finalized before the new vaccine entry requirement is put in place and 212(f) travel restrictions are eased, including:

- Protocols for validating vaccine status: The CDC will require airlines to validate the vaccine status for all inbound international arrivals to the U.S. However, it is still unclear what specific information passengers will be required to provide and in what format (e.g. paper or approved digital credentials).
- Testing protocols for unvaccinated Americans reentering the U.S. Unvaccinated Americans that travel abroad and then attempt to reenter the U.S. will be required to undergo stricter testing protocols upon entry, such as providing proof of a negative test within 24 hours of departure and testing upon reentry. However, it remains to be seen how the federal government or airlines will enforce the testing requirement upon return.
- Testing and vaccination requirements for children under the age of 18. While children under the age of 18 will likely be exempt from the vaccine requirement, it is still unclear if any additional testing requirements will be in place for unvaccinated children under the age of 17 and if different testing requirements will be used for children under the age of 12.