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CDC Says Stay Home, But 45 Million People Will Travel Anyway This Thanksgiving

U.S. Travel has issued new guidance urging mask-wearing and other safety measures.



by [Loren G. Edelstein](#)

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The CDC updated its guidance on Thanksgiving travel yesterday with a strong recommendation: [Stay home](#). With more than 1 million new Covid-19 cases reported in the U.S. in the past week, the safest decision is to celebrate with the people in your household, the health agency noted in a Nov. 19 briefing.

As of yesterday, transmission models projected that virus transmission will multiply dramatically over the next four weeks. During the week ending Dec. 12, 2020, between 810,000 and 2.3 million [new Covid-19 cases will likely be reported](#).

Risks notwithstanding, some 45 million people are expected to travel for Thanksgiving anyway, according to the [latest estimates](#) by the [American Automobile Association](#). That's down from 55 million last year, representing the largest one-year decrease since the Great Recession in 2008.

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Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association

"We're very aware that a couple of hours ago the CDC advised that people should reconsider their travel plans because of the alarming number of cases that are

being recorded," [U.S. Travel Association](#) president [Roger Dow](#) said in a media call yesterday. "This further under underscores the need to be really smart and highly vigilant on health and safety protocols."

He added: "The travel industry's focus is on providing the safest possible door-to-door environment for all travelers, no matter where they're going, and no matter how they're going to get there... I've said it over a thousand times: If people don't have confidence that it's safe to travel, there absolutely will be no travel."

The public has an important role to play, Dow stressed. "It can't be said enough: If you're out in public, everyone should wear a mask. The travel industry is all in on this, and the evidence has only grown stronger that universal mask-wearing is effective in containing the spread of the Covid virus." He added, "We're disappointed to see that mask-wearing in public is not being embraced by everyone, as it should be. If everyone did it, we would be able to get this behind us much more quickly."

U.S. Travel released an updated version of "[Travel in the New Normal: Industry Guidance for Promoting the Health and Safety of All Travelers](#)," which incorporates recommendations from the CDC and other public-health experts for the travel industry to operate safely, and for travelers to follow health-safety protocols.

The guide offers extensive advice for travel suppliers to establish and improve upon safe operating procedures, which were addressed during the press call by Michael D. Parkinson, MD, a past president of American College of Preventive Medicine and principal of P3 Health, including limiting or eliminating lines, and providing touchless transactions for purchases, ID confirmation, check-in/checkout, food ordering and pickup.

"Further scientific research in the past six to seven months has indicated that effective air ventilation, circulation and filtration systems can be an important control element for the virus," noted Parkinson. "The guidance encourages traveling-related businesses to review and, as appropriate, implement the latest published standards on air ventilation."

Among other recommendations is the use of contact-tracing apps by travel businesses and travelers themselves. Available through many states free of charge, these tools facilitate the anonymous gathering of data and inform users if they've been exposed to someone who has tested positive. "This could help identify individuals and get them to go to quarantine or isolation earlier than they might do otherwise. Again, dampens that curve," said Parkinson.

Dow concluded the call by again stressing the urgency of mask-wearing. "Wearing a mask is not only to protect yourself, but to protect others around you. Please do not take it upon yourself to take risks or impose risks on others."

Go or No? Consider These Deciding Factors

Those thinking about traveling over the holiday should ask themselves these questions, suggests the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- Are you, someone in your household, or someone you will be visiting at [increased risk for getting very sick from Covid-19](#)?
- Are cases high or increasing in your community or your destination? Check CDC's [Covid Data Tracker](#) for the latest number of cases.
- Are hospitals in your community or your destination overwhelmed with patients who have Covid-19? To find out, check [state and local public-health department websites](#).
- Does your home or destination have requirements or restrictions for travelers? Check [state and local requirements](#) before you travel.
- During the 14 days before your travel, have you or those you are visiting had close contact with people they don't live with?
- Do your plans include traveling by bus, train or air that might make staying 6 feet apart difficult?
- Are you traveling with people who don't live with you?

If the answer is "yes" to any of the above, it would be wise to stay home, the CDC advises.

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