

# ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# COVID-19 FAQs

## FAQs on Guidance for Travelers

Updated 7-3-20

As cases of COVID-19 rise dramatically across the country and in Allegheny County, the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) strongly recommends that people take precautions while traveling and quarantine for 14 days after returning. This may not be possible so an alternative is to get tested and have either two (2) negative test results with tests taken at least 48 hours apart or one test no sooner than 4 days after you return. This is especially important for individuals who engaged in high risk travel, and those who work with large groups of people or with the public.

The following Frequently Asked Questions (and answers) are intended to provide additional information on the Guidance for Travelers to help residents stay safe during travel and reduce spread upon return.

### **What does the Allegheny County Health Department recommend for people who have traveled out of state?**

On June 28, 2020, ACHD Director Dr. Debra Bogen strongly recommended that people who have traveled out of state quarantine for 14 days after returning. An alternative is to get tested and have two (2) negative test results with tests taken at least 48 hours apart before returning to work. Two tests reduce the possibility of false negative tests but may be challenging to get. If only one test is possible, get tested no sooner than 4 days from your return. This is especially important for people who:

- Travel to states with high COVID-19 cases over the past two (2) weeks and positivity rates at or approaching 8 to 10%. This resource from Johns Hopkins University shows state-by-state data:  
<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/testing/individual-states>
- Travel to states with lax public health requirements or enforcement
- Use group modes of travel like airplanes, buses or trains to get to their destination,
- Or while traveling:
  - Visit crowded places where maintaining six (6) feet of distance is difficult, including day trips
  - Stay at hotels, motels or resorts or with non-household members
  - Go to bars, restaurants or crowded shops
  - Have travel that involves large in-person meetings or social gatherings

This is recommended as a strategy to reduce the spread of the coronavirus among people who have traveled out of state. It is especially important for employees who interact with the public.

Quarantining or testing may not be as important for low risk travel. Low risk travel includes:

- Travel to states with low COVID-19 cases and low positivity rates
- Driving with members of your household
- Visiting secluded places and keeping 6 feet of distance, including day trips
- Camping or staying at private accommodations with members of your household
- Not frequenting bars, restaurants or crowded shops
- Commuting to neighboring states in your personal vehicle

Quarantining or testing after traveling is a strong recommendation from the Health Department, not a requirement. It is up to each individual depending on their specific travel whether to take action. You should seek testing at any time if you have been exposed to a known case of COVID-19 or are worried that you may have been exposed to the virus.

**What if I am going to state where cases of COVID-19 are relatively low and have not been increasing recently?**

The Health Department's recommendation is primarily meant for those traveling to states with a high number of cases or high positivity rates. If you are traveling to a state that does not fit those criteria, you may not need to take any action upon your return.

That being said, the coronavirus is spreading in every state in the country, even ones with a low number of cases or positivity rate. If during your travels you were in large crowds or visited crowded places where it was difficult to keep six (6) feet from others, you may have been exposed to the virus and may want to consider quarantine or testing.

Quarantining or testing after traveling is a strong recommendation from the Health Department, not a requirement. It is up to each individual depending on their specific travel whether to take action.

**What if I am traveling for work?**

This recommendation should be considered if you travel by common modes, like airplane, bus or train, to your destination, or if your travel includes large in-person meetings, social gatherings, banquets, receptions or visits to crowded bars or restaurants. This includes travel for work.

Before traveling for work, speak with your employer and inform them of the Health Department's strong recommendation that you quarantine or seek testing after travel. Inquire if it is possible to conduct business virtually or remotely without requiring travel. The governor's "Process to Reopen Pennsylvania" asks businesses in any phase of reopening to continue telework or working from home if possible.

**What if I commute out of state for work?**

The Health Department's recommendation is especially important for high risk travel. Remember to take precautions while commuting.

- Travel alone or with members of your household
- Wear a mask when visiting gas stations, convenience stores or restaurants
- Consider drive-thru or takeout options for meals
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before and after eating and after using public restrooms and visiting gas stations or convenience stores

You should seek testing at any time if you have been exposed to a known case of COVID-19 or are worried that you may have been exposed to the virus.

### **What if I stay in a hotel, motel or resort with only members of my household?**

It is strongly recommended you quarantine or seek testing after staying in a hotel, motel or resort, even with only members of your household, because of the prevalence of high-touch surfaces such as counters, door knobs and elevator buttons and because of the potential for close contact with members outside your household, including staff. Guests could come from all over the country and could spread the virus even at hotels, motels or resorts in states with a low number of cases or low positivity rates.

### **What if I stay in a beach house, cabin or cottage with only members of my household?**

Private accommodations, such as a beach house, cabin or cottage, with only members of your household may offer a safer lodging alternative to hotels, motels or resorts. It is important to take precautions during your stay.

- Avoid crowded places and close contact with others
- Consider wearing a mask when out
- Opt for takeout from bars or restaurants instead of dining in
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer frequently

It is strongly recommended that you quarantine or seek testing if your travels included visiting crowded areas, bars, restaurants or other attractions even if you are staying in a private accommodation with only members of your household.

### **What if I fly or take a train or bus?**

Common conveyances like airplanes, trains, buses, and locations like airports or train or bus stations provide ample opportunities for the virus to spread. It is strongly recommended that you quarantine or seek testing after traveling in this manner.

It is also important to take precautions while traveling using these conveyances.

- Attempt to keep 6 feet from people who are not members of your household
- Consider wearing a mask, even if they are not required
- Cover coughs or sneezes with your arm or use a tissue. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after coughing or sneezing
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer frequently, especially after touching high-touch surfaces and before and after eating, drinking or smoking

### **What if I drive with only members of my household?**

Private transportation with only members of your household may offer a safer alternative. Remember to take precautions while driving.

- Travel alone or with members of your household
- Wear a mask when visiting gas stations or restaurants
- Consider drive-thru or takeout options for meals
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before and after eating and after using public restrooms and visiting gas stations or convenience stores

### **Do I have to quarantine or seek testing if I take a day trip out of state?**

The Health Department's recommendation is based on the potential for exposure to the coronavirus in crowded places. It is best to avoid such places even during day trips.

### **When should I get tested after traveling?**

Two tests reduce the false negative tests but is often not possible.

If you can get two tests, it is ideal to get the first test a couple of days after return and the second test at least 48 hours later. Residents should not attempt to get two tests within 48 hours of returning from travel. You should wait for the results of your first test before seeking a second test.

If only one test is possible, it is recommended that you wait at least 4 days after your last possible exposure to get tested.

### **Where can I get tested after traveling? Do I have to be showing symptoms?**

Many testing locations in Allegheny County will offer testing to people who are returning from travel because of the risk of exposure connected to traveling and the Health Department's recommendation. You do not have to show symptoms to get tested. Some sites have a limit on how often or how many tests an individual can have.

A map of testing sites in the county is available at: <https://bit.ly/ACTestingSiteMap>

### **What should I do while I'm waiting for my test results?**

You should limit contact with others while you are waiting for your two negative test results. You could be spreading the virus even if you aren't showing symptoms. Information about caring for yourself is available on the Health Department's COVID-19 website at [www.alleghenycounty.us/coronavirus](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/coronavirus) under the "What is COVID-19" section.

Activities that limit your exposure to others are acceptable, for example going for a walk with members of your household, working in your yard, and the like.

