CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)
7 TIPS FOR TRAVELING

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Experts recommend carefully considering which method of transportation you choose when traveling during the pandemic. If you've been cooped up at home all spring and summer, you're probably bursting to get out. But is it smart to travel? It can be, if you do it properly. People need to periodically take time off or a vacation. It's essential, but if you're the type who usually wings it, this is not the time to be doing that. To travel well right now, you must carefully consider COVID-19 risk and plan every detail.

1. PERSONALLY ASSESS YOUR SITUATION

No matter where you're going and how many precautions you take, traveling when the novel coronavirus is still widely circulating is not risk-free. **Recent virus upticks in places which had largely beaten back, have been attributed to vacationers.**

The first question to ask yourself is how risky would traveling be for you and your loved ones? You need to view everything through your personal perspective. Are you, or is anyone you're planning to travel with, at high risk for severe COVID-19 consequences? **Older adults and people with underlying conditions, including type 2 diabetes, kidney disease, heart conditions, cancer, and obesity, are more likely to become seriously ill and require hospitalization if they catch the coronavirus.** If you fall into one of these categories, going to a crowded place with many other vacationers is likely too risky, But a **more isolated spot away from crowds might be okay.**

You should also assess the location you're coming from. **If you're flying from an area with many cases, odds are higher that a passenger near you may have the disease, which would raise your infection risk.** Wherever you're going, consider taking a coronavirus test in the days or week before leaving. Getting a negative result will reduce the odds you'll unknowingly bring the virus with you.

2. THINK THROUGH YOUR MODE OF TRAVEL

If the destination can be reached within a day, experts consider **driving to be the safest mode of transportatio**n because it **limits your interactions with others.** Flying can also be relatively safe, so long as proper precautions are taken. The airlines should ensure planes are thoroughly cleaned and **maintain sufficient distance between passengers during the boarding process.** As a passenger, you can **look for an airline that does not fill all of its seats, remain in your seat as much as possible during the flight, and keep your mask on** as much as possible, especially when others nearby remove theirs to eat or drink. **Buses are the most challenging, as their ventilation systems may not be as good as those on planes,** an important way microbes are removed from the air.

3. BE CHOOSY ABOUT WHERE YOU STAY

Fortunately, a lot of hotel chains are paying special attention to sanitizing guest rooms and high-touch common areas. Some are also **"buffering" rooms, keeping them unoccupied for a day or two between guests to allow any virus in the air sufficient time to diminish.** If you decide to stay in a hotel, **call beforehand to ask what procedures they are following.**

Many travelers are instead **choosing to rent an entire house from sites like VRBO or Airbnb, so they won't have to worry about passing people in the lobby or stepping into a crowded elevator.** But because homes are owned by private individuals, the level of sanitation before your arrival will vary considerably.

No matter where you stay, **as soon as you arrive at your lodging open the windows for a little while (if you can), to boost ventilation by bringing in fresh air.** Even if the place looks spotless, **disinfect all high touch surfaces** yourself, especially light switches, sink faucet handles, doorknobs, and remote controls. If there's a kitchen, **wash all plates, cups, and silverware before using.**

4. COOK OR BRING IN TAKEOUT

One of the risks of leaving home is what to do about the meals you'll be eating. **Getting takeout or cooking your own food while traveling is safest. Eating at an outdoor restaurant is considered relatively safe** (although not as low risk as pickup), but **it's not a good idea to plan to eat all meals out. Weather could also cause you to have to move indoors,** which carries a much higher threat. **Be sure each outdoor restaurant is following proper protocol,** such as ensuring that staff and wandering patrons are **wearing masks and that tables are set far enough apart** to allow for social distancing.

5. DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN

While on vacation it's easy to feel like the limitations of your regular life don't apply. But there are no magical protections that keep the virus at bay just because you're away from home. **It's important to follow general CDC guidance at all times, including washing hands regularly, avoiding touching your face as much as possible, keeping 6 (or ideally more) feet of distance between yourself and others, and, crucially, wearing a mask in all public settin**gs.

6. BE SMART ABOUT EACH ACTIVITY

There may be activities you always love to do on vacation, but it may not be wise to do them now. **Bars, karaoke cafes, theme parks with inside rides, and other indoor activities will put you at increased risk of getting sick.**

Instead, **explore nature, perhaps going hiking, kayaking, apple picking, or engaging in other endeavors that keep you outside and distanced from others.** Look for venues offering creative ways to entertain safely. Drive-in concerts or movies are offered in some locales are fun and lower risk.

7. REEVALUATE AT EVERY TURN

Book lodging and activities that you can cancel, even at the last minute. **Should you or someone you're traveling with develop symptoms or come into contact with someone with COVID-19, nix the trip and stay home.** You must be willing to say it's not working out, even for something you've already paid for. With a contagious virus around, **safety has to take a higher priority than money.**