Holiday travel guidance: Suggested talking points

- **Wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask while traveling.**
  - Even though there is no longer a mask mandate for public transportation, you should wear a mask while traveling.
  - The CDC recommends masking indoors on planes, trains, buses, and boats, as well as at transportation hubs, such as airports, stations, and seaports.
  - N95 and KN95 masks provide the best protection, whereas cloth masks only block **about 10 to 30 percent** of virus particles.
  - Make sure there are no leaks around your mask and that your hands are clean before touching it.
  - It’s safest to **throw out your mask** after using it throughout a travel day.

- **Take a rapid test before and after traveling and gathering.**
  - Test right before traveling or gathering to ensure that you are not bringing COVID-19 with you. If you do test positive, you should delay your travel.
  - Test five days after traveling or gathering, or sooner if you have been exposed or develop symptoms.
  - To **avoid getting a false negative**, take two tests 48 hours apart if you have been exposed and have symptoms. Take three tests, each 48 hours apart, if you have been exposed but do not have symptoms.
  - Every household can once again order four free at-home COVID-19 tests. You can access more free tests through your health plan or through community health centers or certain pharmacies.

- **Be selective about the risks you’re willing to take.**
  - Taking precautions will allow you to celebrate the holiday season with loved ones with less risk.
  - If you stopped masking over the past few months, consider **putting your mask back on** in indoor public areas now that COVID-19, flu, and RSV are all circulating.
  - Consider limiting your social activities in the week leading up to travel or gathering to reduce the chance of getting sick, especially if you will be seeing individuals who are immunocompromised or at high risk.
  - Your goal should still be to avoid infection, as long COVID remains a very real risk, even if you are vaccinated or boosted.
Holiday travel guidance: Frequently asked questions

1. **Is it too late to get an updated booster to be protected for the holidays?**

   It typically takes around two weeks after receiving a vaccine or booster to develop a full immune response. But early data has found that people can gain some benefit as soon as a few days after receiving a shot. So, no, it's not too late to get an updated booster. In fact, you should get one (as well as your flu shot) as soon as possible.

2. **Are masks effective against COVID-19, flu, and RSV?**

   Masks prevent the spread of all kinds of germs and viruses, including COVID-19, flu, and RSV. For the best protection, wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask, such as an N95 or KN95. Masking is most important in indoor public areas, crowds, and close-contact situations.

3. **When should I take a rapid test before and after traveling or gathering?**

   You should take a rapid test as close to the time of travel or gathering as possible. Rapid tests are very accurate in telling if you are currently infectious, so taking it the day of travel or gathering is most useful. To check if you got infected during your trip or event, take a rapid test five days after getting home. If you develop symptoms before then, test immediately and take a second test 48 hours later to avoid a false negative. If you do not have symptoms but have been exposed, take three tests, each 48 hours apart.