

Banner Health shares travel safety tips for those planning to travel over the holidays

PHOENIX (November 3, 2020) – As Thanksgiving and Christmas quickly approach, Banner Health is providing safety tips for those who wish to travel during the holidays. This activity can be higher risk during a pandemic, and there are many things travelers should consider before booking their flights or renting a car.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that travel increases the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19, and that the best way to protect yourself and others is to stay home. Banner also recommends that you avoid travel during the holidays and opt for smaller holiday celebrations with those who live in your immediate household.

If you do decide to travel, it is important to follow CDC's guidance to reduce your chances of contracting or spreading COVID-19.

"Following CDC travel recommendations for this holiday season is the best way to protect yourself and those you care about the most from COVID-19 infection," said Helen Arnold, RN, an infection prevention specialist at Banner Desert Medical Center and Banner Children's at Desert.

Here are some travel recommendations from Banner Health and the CDC to reduce your risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19.

Low Risk

The travel option that presents the lowest risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 is to take short trips by car with family members in the same household.

Recommendations on how to travel by car include:

- Visit places close enough that do not involve stopping for a restroom or fuel.
 - If you need to stop for gas, wipe down pump handles and buttons before you touch them. After fueling, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. When you get to your destination, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If you need to stop to use a public restroom, make sure you wear a mask and wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom.

- Consider staying at a private, short-term vacation rental instead of a hotel or a family member's or friend's home. In a private rental, you can also cook your food and avoid interactions at restaurants.
 - The safest option is to bring your food and drinks. If you can't, however, use drive-through, delivery, take-out or curbside pick-up options.
- Bring a face mask that covers your nose and mouth and put at least 6 feet of distance between you and others if you must be out in public.

Medium Risk

You are considered at moderate risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 if you travel by public transit like a train or bus or if you stay with extended family members. Public transit and being around those outside of your immediate household can put you at greater risk. If people choose to make the personal decision to travel by train or bus or to stay with a family member, the following recommendations are important to keep in mind to lower your risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19:

- Buy your tickets online or choose contactless reservations and payment so you minimize direct contact with others. If you must touch surfaces, wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- While on public transit, make sure you wear a mask, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth and put distance between you and others when possible. Traveling on buses and trains for any length of time can involve sitting or standing within 6 feet of others, which may increase your risk of getting COVID-19.
 - After you leave the station, use hand sanitizer and wash your hands when you reach your destination.

If you stay with a family member outside of your immediate household, consider the following:

- Before your visit, carefully analyze your family's vulnerabilities and medical conditions as well as the family you'll be staying with.
- If you are concerned about exposing others like high-risk family members to COVID-19, consider a 14-day quarantine prior to staying in their home.
- You may feel well but consider wearing a mask and distancing yourself from others while inside the home and around those who are not a part of your household.
- Frequently sanitize high-touch surfaces and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer often.
- Throughout your visit, monitor your health and look for symptoms of COVID-19.

High Risk

Traveling by plane is considered a high-risk activity. Airports are doing their part to minimize contact and promote social distancing. Additionally, commercial airplanes are designed to clean and filter air quickly, but these features won't eliminate your risk.

Air travel will put you in close contact with hundreds of other people who do not live in your immediate household and frequently touched surfaces, which is why it's one of the highest risk modes of transportation for contracting and spreading COVID-19.

If your only option is to travel by plane, consider the following to stay safe:

- Research airlines to see what safety precautions are being taken. Some airlines have blocked middle seats and require mandatory masking.
- Book direct flights to avoid layovers.
- Add extra cloth masks, alcohol-based hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes and a thermometer to your packing list.
- Consider a hands-free boarding pass using your digital device instead of a paper copy.
- Place personal items, such as your wallet and keys in a carry-on bag instead of using the bins during security screenings.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after you go through screening.
- Bring hand sanitizer to use throughout your flight and sanitizing wipes to disinfect your tray table and armrests on the airplane.
- Wash your hands with soap and water when you reach your destination.

To learn more about other travel safety recommendations, visit [Banner Health's blog](#).

About Banner Health

As one of the largest nonprofit health care systems in the country, the team at Banner Health is committed to ensuring all Banner locations are a safe place for care. Headquartered in Phoenix, Banner Health owns and operates 30 acute-care hospitals and an array of other services, including Banner Imaging, Banner Telehealth, and Banner Urgent Care. Team members are dedicated to protecting the health and safety of patients, be it a routine checkup, elective surgery or an urgent health service. Waiting room and employee workstation layouts maintain proper social distancing; screenings are conducted at hospital entrances to verify that all employees and visitors are well; and, all Banner physicians are equipped to visit patients remotely. Learn more about Banner's commitment to safety at bannerhealth.com/safecare.

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