



Travel restrictions have eased, and more people are travelling. However, new COVID-19 subvariants and cases continue to be reported around the world. We asked our Regional Medical Directors about the trends and inconsistencies in travel and related restrictions...

Our Assistance Centres are currently facing several challenges regarding travel advice and variations by region. These include

## EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST

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- Variances in restrictions and entry requirements.
- Complacent individuals travelling outside Europe to locations where COVID-19 related restrictions are still in place. *In some cases, departures have been delayed due to insufficient pre-travel planning. Some travellers are also unaware that mandatory self-isolation for a defined period remains a legal requirement in some countries.*
- Belief that travel is now back to normal worldwide. In fact, disruption persists, fuelled by factors such as airport congestion, flight delays and cancellations, baggage- handling issues and limited customs and security staffing. *We continue to encounter expressions of frustration during calls, as well as situations where unprepared travellers have run out of routine medications during delays.*
- Observational evidence suggesting reduced resilience among some travellers, with increased demand for psychological support services.



### Patterns and inconsistencies in travel restrictions in Europe

- Most EU countries no longer stipulate any pre-travel testing or proof of vaccination. However, there are some exceptions and some countries still require the completion of passenger locator forms.
- Mask wearing has been dropped in many countries. Nevertheless, some countries retain mandatory mask requirements in certain settings, such as on public transport. Some even require certain types of masks (FFP2) to be worn, necessitating pre-travel checks.
- There remains significant variance regarding requirements for self-isolation in the event of testing positive for COVID-19.

*Dr Ryan Copeland, Regional Medical Director, EMEA*



## ASIA

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- A 'zero COVID policy' remains in place in China and its Special Administrative Regions (Macao and Hong Kong). Travellers entering China (after visa approval) must undergo a seven-day Government Quarantine and a three-day Residence Quarantine. This could change rapidly in the event of a surge in COVID-19 cases. Requirements may vary by city.
- Travellers requiring medical evacuation in Asia will encounter complications if they have COVID-19 (primary or secondary diagnosis). *In some cases, patients who have sustained fractures have not been accepted by medical centres because they have concurrent COVID-19 infections.*
- Mask-wearing in outdoor settings is no longer mandatory in most Asian countries. However, it is usually still required indoors.

*Dr David Teo, Regional Medical Director, Asia*



## AMERICAS

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- Our region has many countries with widely differing restrictions and entry requirements.
- Quarantine and isolation protocols differ in many countries.

- New COVID-19 subvariants and nurse shortages continue to negatively affect hospital systems.
- Sudden changes in requirements may cause disruption. For example, Canada on 19 July implemented random testing at certain airports.
- Domestic and international travel has significantly increased.
- Some governmental websites are difficult to navigate, and additional information must be gathered by contacting the Ministry of Health.
- Although the US follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance on recommendations, there is not regular enforcement.

*Mark B. Fischer, MD, Regional Medical Director, Americas*



## AFRICA

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- Inconsistencies - *For example, a minority of African countries no longer require any pre-travel testing or proof of vaccination. However, this is inconsistent and may differ even from day to day. Individual officials may occasionally apply a different standard to published guidelines.*
- Generally, if proof of vaccination is on hand, no testing is required.
- Some countries retain mask-wearing mandates for certain settings such as public areas. This can be inconsistently policed, and if in doubt it is safer to wear a mask.
- Self-isolation requirements following a positive COVID-19 test continue to vary. In most countries this must be undertaken at the individual's residence without close monitoring or other contact from the authorities.

*Dr Steve Lunt, Regional Medical Director, Africa*