

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Before You Travel, Know the Protective Health Practices and the Risks

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **In this Brain Boost we talk about how to stay brain safe and brain healthy if you are traveling this summer.***

After months of staying safe at home and practicing social distancing, we are all ready to get back to “normal.” But before we hit the road (or take flight) this summer, it is important to do our homework to help protect our physical and brain health.

The number one recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is to get vaccinated against COVID-19 before traveling. The current CDC guidelines for domestic and international travel begin with: “Do not travel until you are fully vaccinated.” Fully vaccinated means two weeks after the second dose of a two-dose vaccine, such as Pfizer or Moderna, or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as the Johnson & Johnson Janssen vaccine.

Before reuniting with family and friends, returning to a favorite getaway spot, or booking that once-in-a-lifetime trip, it’s important to remember that travel still looks very different than it did pre-pandemic. Many parts of the world are still experiencing high infection rates and a rise in COVID-19 variants are limiting travelers from entering some countries.

Even as things are re-opening throughout the U.S. there is still a great deal of uncertainty around when and where masks are required, reopening timelines, and access to restaurants and tourist destinations.

For those of us taking to the skies this summer, masks are required in all U.S. airports and on all flights. Social distancing on planes has been discontinued so expect flights to be full and a lack of space in the overhead bins. Airports are crowded, and check-in lines are long, so allow extra time when arriving at the airport. After a year of social distancing, the experience of being in a busy airport and crowded together on a plane may be overwhelming for some travelers.

For international travel, all air passengers coming into the United States, including U.S. citizens and fully vaccinated people, are required to have a negative COVID-19 test result no more than three days before travel or documentation of recovery from COVID-19 in the past three months before they board a flight to the United States.

Researchers at Harvard's [T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) point out that your personal commitment to traveling safely can provide an added measure of protection during air travel. That starts with staying home if you feel ill, wearing a mask wherever it is required, and stepping back from crowds at places like boarding gates and baggage claim.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Perhaps the best source of information when it comes to being brain healthy while traveling, is the [CDC website](#). If you are fully vaccinated, the CDC recommends:

- Wear a mask. Masks are required on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and while indoors at U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations. Masks are not required in outdoor areas.
- Follow all state and local recommendations and requirements regarding mask wearing and social distancing.

If you are not fully vaccinated, the CDC recommends:

- Get tested for COVID-19 one to three days before your trip.
- Wear a mask. Masks are required on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and while indoors at U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations. Masks are not required in outdoor areas.
- Avoid crowds and stay at least six feet from anyone who is not traveling with you.
- Wash your hands often or use hand sanitizer.
- Get tested three to five days after travel AND stay home and self-quarantine for a full seven days after travel, even if you test negative. If you don't get tested, stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.
- If your test is positive, isolate yourself to protect others from getting infected.
- Avoid being around people who are at increased risk for severe illness for 14 days, whether you get tested or not.
- Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms.

And don't forget to **BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle** that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- Stress resilience

- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection
- Emotional wellbeing
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is a collaborative effort with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, to build brain healthy communities through education, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention, and optimization of performance*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference***. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).

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