

CDC stops tracking COVID cases on cruise ships

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The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has [ended](#) its

program to monitor COVID-19 cases on cruise ships, leaving the industry to manage infection risks aboard its vessels.

Cruise ships experienced some of the earliest coronavirus outbreaks as the pandemic began. The CDC had monitored cases for two years under the COVID-19 Program for Cruise Ships.

Cruise lines can still opt into the program by agreeing to follow all the [recommendations and guidance](#), while the CDC used a color-coded chart to show transmission levels.

"[The] CDC has determined that the cruise industry has access to the necessary tools [e.g., cruise-specific recommendations and guidance, vaccinations, testing instruments, treatment modalities and non-pharmaceutical interventions] to prevent and mitigate COVID-19 on board," an agency spokesperson told *CBS News*. "Therefore, CDC's COVID-19 Program for Cruise Ships is no longer in effect as of today."

The decision allows the cruise lines to set their own COVID-19 policies. Some have already updated guidance for travel requirements, *CBS News* reported.

Princess Cruises provided [updated guidance](#) on Monday, now encouraging vaccinated and unvaccinated passengers to vacation on the ships. The cruise line said it can now accommodate more unvaccinated guests on sailings "without burdensome exemptions or vaccine status justification."

Another cruise line, Royal Caribbean, said it is awaiting updated CDC [guidance](#) before it changes any COVID protocols, *CBS News* reported. Guests from U.S. ports currently must be vaccinated and provide a negative PCR or antigen test taken no more than two days before they board.

The CDC noted that [safety measures](#) will likely vary among the different companies and urged travelers to communicate with cruise operators about COVID policies. The CDC also said cruise travel continues to pose "some risk of COVID-19 transmission."

Early in the pandemic, cruise lines were significantly impacted by lost sales, especially before vaccines were available and social distancing was the primary mitigation tactic. In 2020 and 2021, the cruise lines lost a combined \$63 billion and thousands of jobs, *CBS News* reported.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers COVID-19 [travel guidance](#).

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