

How risky is flying during the coronavirus pandemic?

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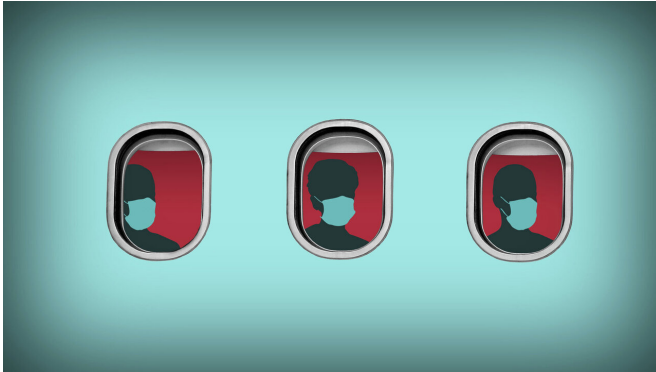


Illustration by Peter Hamlin

planes are getting fuller.

American, United and Spirit are now booking flights to full capacity when they can. All leading U.S. airlines require passengers to wear masks. Lauren Ancel Meyers, an expert in disease outbreaks at the University of Texas, says that can help limit risk.

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How risky is flying during the coronavirus pandemic?

Flying can increase your risk of exposure to infection, but [airlines](#) are taking some precautions and you can too.

Air travel means spending time in security lines and airport terminals, which puts you into close contact with other people. As travel slowly recovers, planes are becoming more crowded, which means you will likely sit close to other people, often for hours, which raises your risk.

Once on a [plane](#), most viruses and other germs don't spread easily because of the way air circulates, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Airlines also say they are focusing on sanitizing the hard surfaces that passengers commonly touch.

Some airlines like Alaska, Delta, JetBlue and Southwest are blocking middle seats or limiting capacity. But even if every middle seat is empty you will likely be closer than the recommended distance of 6 feet to another [passenger](#) now that

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