

Canada Will Require Vaccine to Fly: Will U.S. Follow?

(Courtesy of Airfarewatchdog.com – Peter Thornton)

Following a similar move in France, Canada recently announced that it will soon require vaccination for all commercial air travelers within Canada. This goes one step beyond vaccine requirements for international travel and opens up the debate for whether the U.S. would ever implement a similar policy for domestic travel.

When Will Air Travel in Canada Require a Vaccine?



At the moment, there hasn't been a definitive date set for when this policy will be implemented. A [news release](#) from the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat stated that it would go into effect "as soon as possible in the fall and no later than the end of October."

Canada also plans to require vaccination for all federal employees by the end of September and the vaccination for travel requirement will apply to passengers on interprovincial trains and cruise ships as well.

Although Canada has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, these measures are aimed both at protecting travelers and encouraging the nearly 6 million eligible Canadians who aren't currently vaccinated to get the vaccine as soon as possible. The Canadian government will also work with other [federally regulated sectors](#), such as banking, broadcasting, and telecommunications, to ensure employers require vaccination for their employees.

Minister of Transport Omar Alghabra stated, “This is the right thing to do and will ensure Canada continues to build back better from the global COVID-19 pandemic.”

The announcement came on the heels of Canada opening its international borders to vaccinated Americans on August 9, 2021. After a 17-month border closure, American citizens are finally allowed to enter Canada for non-essential travel for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic. As it stands, fully vaccinated travelers from other nations will be allowed to enter Canada starting September 7, 2021.

Will the U.S. Require Vaccines for Domestic Travel?

The Biden administration is also trying to encourage more U.S. citizens to get vaccinated. It now requires federal workers to sign forms attesting that they have been vaccinated. If not, federal workers are required to wear masks, submit weekly tests, and practice social distancing. It has even taken steps to require vaccine shots for international travelers entering the United States, though currently only a negative test is required.

However, mandating a vaccine for domestic travel in the U.S. is a careful balancing act. So far, Biden has held off on proposing such a mandate even though there is evidence that a slight majority of Americans support proof of a vaccine for flying within the U.S. [Gallup](#) conducted a poll in May that revealed 57 percent of adults favored businesses requiring proof of vaccination to fly. That increased to 64 percent in a more recent survey by [The Harris Poll](#).

According to an article in the [Associated Press](#), the administration worries that such a vaccine mandate for domestic travel would be “too polarizing at this time” and was not under consideration. However, the Department of Transportation has extended its federal mask mandate for domestic travel through January 18, 2022.

Airline CEOs Don’t Foresee Vaccine Requirement in U.S.

Of course, companies across the nation are able to impose their own requirements and several have begun to mandate that employees get vaccinated, including a few airlines. However, when asked whether passengers will need to be vaccinated to fly, United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby [told CNN](#), “it’s a government question, but I suspect that it won’t happen domestically.”

In May, Delta CEO Ed Bastian also told CNN in an [interview](#) that vaccines likely won’t be required to fly within the U.S.

FDA Vaccine Approval Leads to More Mandates

One factor that may have had companies and government agencies hesitant to mandate vaccines is the fact that, until recently, all three vaccines approved by the FDA were only under an emergency use authorization.

On August 23, 2021, the FDA fully approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for individuals 16 years of age and older. This approval has already led more companies to require that its employees get vaccinated and the Pentagon has even moved forward with plans to mandate vaccines for all active-duty troops.

While Pfizer's full approval is certainly a step towards a federal vaccine requirement for domestic travel, I think such a mandate is still unlikely until other vaccines receive full approval and more Americans get vaccinated. For now, we'll likely see more local governments and private businesses impose proof of vaccination requirements to enter indoor areas or events with large groups of people.

As far as flying goes, Americans still only need to show proof of vaccination for certain international travel destinations. Domestically, as long as you wear a mask, flying is open to all travelers.