



COVID-19 Updates: Masks, Testing, and Self-Care

Throughout our response to COVID-19, NASA leadership has taken a forward-leaning approach to prioritizing the health and safety of its workforce. For this reason, recent guidance from the new administration on mask wearing does not differ greatly from NASA's current policy.

The policy now is all on-site employees must wear a mask and practice physical distancing. Federal employees, on-site contractors, and other individuals in federal buildings and in groups outdoors on federal property (even if physically distanced) must [wear a mask](#) that [covers the nose and mouth](#) and otherwise is in accordance with current [CDC](#) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration guidance.

Face coverings may be removed only:

- if an employee is alone in an office with floor-to-ceiling walls and a door, or alone outdoors;
- when alone in a vehicle;
- for brief periods of eating or drinking; or,
- when a face covering creates a real hazard, as determined by center safety officials.

Individuals may lower their masks briefly for identification purposes in compliance with safety and security requirements.

In accordance with a CDC [mask order](#) issued Jan. 29, face coverings also must be worn on all public transit, in airports, train stations, etc. The Transportation Security Administration provides an extensive FAQ for travelers at <https://www.tsa.gov/coronavirus/faq>.

COVID-19 Testing and Travel

At this time, NASA does not require testing before or after travel. However, several states and communities require testing upon entry and the CDC recommends testing before and after domestic travel.

The agency is making no-cost COVID-19 testing through Quest Diagnostics available to civil servants on official travel orders. If you are on official travel orders, the NASA travel office will provide you instructions on how to order your test.

Once you place your order online, the testing kit will arrive by FedEx within 24-36 hours. Follow the instructions in the kit, drop it off at the nearest FedEx location, and results will be available within 24 hours after Quest receives your test. You may also choose to obtain your test locally, if available and desired, and have the cost of the test reimbursed on your travel voucher.

All questions about travel and related COVID-19 testing should be directed to your center travel office.

Caring for Yourself and Your Colleagues

We are approaching a full year of operating within our COVID-19 response framework. Since March 2020, the majority of the NASA workforce has been teleworking and the line between work and home life has blurred. Those employees still working on-site have done a tremendous job of keeping each other safe while also keeping the mission moving forward. I could not be more proud of our

team and how we have adapted to this situation. I always consider our team to be world-class problem solvers and this is no exception.

As we find ourselves in these circumstances longer than we hoped, it is really important to take extra care to continue to ensure our own well-being and those of our teammates. This is a moment that calls for the same creativity and ingenuity that we bring to our mission. It also calls for extending grace to yourself and others. Look for creative ways to stay motivated and motivate others. If you need a change of scenery, consider working from a different location in your home. I did that myself. It is okay if your dog barks in the middle of a Teams meeting or if your kid walks through the room. I experience the dog issue myself almost daily. I try to get outside to walk that very vocal dog on a regular basis and find that just a little time outside refreshes me mentally and emotionally. It is fine to chat with your teammates as you would at the coffee pot in an office building. We are still humans and need that human contact.

Don't forget that there are [resources](#) available to you and your team if you need someone to talk to about any of this. Beyond that, we all need to remember that the pandemic will end. Things are getting better and will continue to get better. We just need to keep doing what we are doing and hang in there. I have faith in our team and I have faith that this year is going to be better than last year. We don't have all the answers, but we do have each other.

For more information on the agency's response to COVID-19, visit the NASA People COVID-19 Response site at <https://nasapeople.nasa.gov/coronavirus/>.

Best,

Melanie

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