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## **Chicago Department of Public Health Updated Travel Advisory: Fewer U.S. Counties with Medium to High COVID Levels**

CHICAGO – The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) is advising travelers, especially the unvaccinated, to take special precautions if they plan to travel in the coming week to areas of the United States – such as northeast Pennsylvania/northwest New York, Central Arkansas, and Eastern Montana – that have higher COVID-19 risk levels than the rest of the country, based on the Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC’s) COVID-19 Community Levels.

Unvaccinated travelers to these parts of the U.S. should take precautions upon returning to Chicago, including quarantining for five days after travel.

The CDC’s COVID-19 Community Levels (CCL) tool is designed to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest data. Levels can be low, medium, or high and are determined by looking at hospital beds being used by COVID-19 patients, new COVID-19 hospital admissions, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area. The CDC measures COVID-19 Community Levels in counties from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 78 counties in Puerto Rico. CDPH’s Travel Advisory is aligned with this new county-level guidance from the CDC and is providing its travel guidance every Friday.

According to the CDC’s CCL advisory this week, 5.1 percent (163), of the 3,220 counties in the U.S. and Puerto Rico have COVID-19 levels that are “medium” to “high.” That number was 286 last week. There were 53 counties at a “high” community level last week; that has dropped to 17 this week. CDPH advises anyone traveling to these areas to consult the [CDC’s CCL map](#) to determine the risk level and precautions to take. This county-level data from the CDC is color-coded to reflect low (green), medium (yellow), or high (orange) risk. Cook County is currently low risk.

### **COVID-19 Community Levels in U.S. by County**

| <b>Level</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>Percent</b> | <b>% Point Change</b> |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| High         | 17           | 0.53%          | -1.12%                |
| Medium       | 146          | 4.53%          | -2.7%                 |
| Low          | 3057         | 94.94%         | 3.82%                 |
|              |              |                |                       |

Most states have low COVID-19 levels, but a few states, such as Montana, Arkansas, and New York, have some community-level clusters of high COVID-19 levels.

Clusters of medium-to-high COVID-19 levels include rural areas in Central Arkansas and Eastern Montana, and an area that stretches from northeast Pennsylvania, near Scranton, to northwest New York, around Syracuse.

There are no high COVID community levels in the Midwest, though there is an area of medium COVID risk in northwest Michigan. Just one Illinois county, downstate Edgar County, has a medium community level of COVID-19.

ALL travelers should check the CDC map so they know whether the areas they are traveling to are low, medium, or high risk for COVID-19.

- If areas are **low risk (green)**, no additional action must be taken. Continue to follow standard guidance related to travel.
- If the areas are **medium risk (yellow)**, consider wearing a mask in indoor public places.
- If the areas are **high risk (orange)**:
  - Wear a mask in indoor public places.
  - Travelers who are age 5 or older who are *not* up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines are advised to avoid travel to high-risk (orange) counties.
  - Unvaccinated Chicagoans age 5 or older who travel to high-risk (orange) counties, upon returning to Chicago are advised to follow CDC guidance:
    - Stay home and quarantine for 5 days after travel
    - Take a COVID test 3-5 days after return – if it is positive, stay home and [follow CDC guidance](#).
- ALL travelers are also advised to:
  - Ensure you are up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines (including boosters) *before* any planned travel.
  - Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms.
  - Consider packing an at-home COVID test in case you develop symptoms while traveling.
  - Bring a mask with you. Remember that masks are required at airports, on airplanes, and on all public transportation at this time. Businesses may also still choose to require masks.

Given that children under 5 are not yet eligible for vaccination, at this time they are exempted from the City's Travel Advisory, as long as the adults they are traveling with are

vaccinated. Under the updated Advisory, CDPH continues to follow CDC guidance for all travel – including [international travel](#).

Vaccination continues to be the best protection of severe outcomes from COVID-19 – including hospitalization or death. The COVID-19 vaccine is widely available at pharmacies and health care providers across the City. CDPH will bring the vaccine to Chicago residents at their homes, free of charge, through Protect Chicago At Home. Up to 10 people at a residence (age 5 and up) can be vaccinated. Make an appointment at [Chicago.gov/AtHome](https://www.chicago.gov/AtHome) or by calling 312-746-4835. CDPH also holds regular vaccination events across the city, find the full list at [Chicago.gov/VaxCalendar](https://www.chicago.gov/VaxCalendar).

CDPH continues to closely monitor the spread of COVID-19 in other regions across the country. For more information, visit [Chicago.gov/coronavirus](https://www.chicago.gov/coronavirus).

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