



eTrueNorth Offers Five Tips for Travel-related COVID Testing

As one of the largest COVID-19 testing providers, eTrueNorth offers travelers advice on best practices when seeking a COVID-19 test related to travel

Fort Worth, 6-16-2021 –eTrueNorth is one of the largest providers of COVID-19 tests to Americans. With more than 700 sites located across the country, eTrueNorth allows Americans to schedule free COVID-19 tests via its website www.dolneedacovid19test.com. Drawing on the millions of COVID-19 tests performed since the beginning of the pandemic, eTrueNorth is offering advice to travelers on best practices when obtaining a COVID-19 test related to travel.

1.) Know the Requirements

“This is by far the most important bit of advice I can give Americans,” said Coral May, eTrueNorth’s CEO.

“Understand the requirements of the airline, cruise ship, and destination country. The requirements are not uniform, and learning the requirements specific to your mode of travel and destination is paramount.”

The rules are different and vary depending on how you are traveling (bus, airplane, rail, cruise ship, etc.) and where your final destination will be. From the length of time from testing to boarding date, to the testing method, there are many variables for travelers to understand.

It’s also important to understand that these rules are being adapted and updated all the time with the changing situation, so check in often to determine if anything has changed that will affect your travel plans.

For example:

- Not all destinations, airlines and cruise ships will accept an at-home COVID-19 test.
- Some travel-related requirements demand the COVID-19 test be performed at a certified laboratory, while others will accept a rapid test. (See Tip #2 for explanation of laboratory test vs. rapid onsite test.)
- Some want test results within 72 hours of travel, and others require results closer to your arrival date.
- There are some destinations that want you to have a laboratory test before you board a plane and a rapid test when you arrive.

“Just know the requirements that are relevant to your travel plans,” said May. “I recommend that the first step, even before you book tickets, is to understand exactly what the testing requirements are for travel and for your final destination. Don’t assume. Ask specifics.”

2.) Understand the Difference between RT-PCR (laboratory processed); NAAT (molecular rapid) and Point-of-Care Antigen (onsite rapid results)

In general, a PCR test is performed at an offsite traditional laboratory; a molecular NAAT test is usually run at the testing site. If the specimen (nasal swab or saliva) will be collected at one location and then shipped to a laboratory for processing, the PCR test typically requires three to four business days to obtain a result from the day of your specimen collection. Remember, the specimen will likely be shipped for overnight delivery to a laboratory. So, even if you arrive at the specimen collection site at 8 a.m., that specimen may not ship to a laboratory until that evening. Then, when your specimen arrives at the laboratory, there may be thousands of specimens in front of you. Finally, once the specimen is analyzed, it may need to be analyzed a second time. Hence, the process takes three to four business days. Oftentimes, results are available sooner, however plan on three to four days. If your specimen (nasal) is tested on a NAAT Rapid Molecular (Nucleic Acid Amplification Test) analyzer at the testing site, the results are typically available in several hours. Please note, not all travel modalities will accept NAAT test results.

A rapid antigen test is typically performed onsite, with results provided “while you wait.” For a rapid test, the specimen is collected and tested on a point-of-care medical device that will attempt to provide a test result in

about 15 to 20 minutes. While the rapid tests are much more convenient to Americans, they are in general less accurate than the more sensitive PCR tests performed at laboratories.

Back to Tip #1 - Know the Requirements. Be sure you understand if your destination or airline will accept either test method. You absolutely do not want to arrive at your final destination, especially if this is a different country, to learn that you did not have the required COVID-19 test for entry.

3.) **Plan Ahead**

“Do yourself a favor and plan on at least three business days to get a result from a PCR test,” said Michael McEntee, eTrueNorth Chief Science Officer. “You may get the result in one to two days, however plan for the worst-case scenario. It is a very bad idea to wait until the day before your departure date to locate a site, get a specimen collected and hope to obtain results. Just plan ahead.”

A best practice would be to have your specimen collected Monday through Thursday. For the PCR tests, the specimen must be shipped. If you get a specimen collected on a Saturday, that specimen will not be analyzed until Monday. The major shipping companies do not deliver on Sundays.

Some laboratories work on the weekends and others don't. Be mindful of holidays. For example, there will be laboratories that will not work the July 4th weekend.

4.) **Understand That Not All COVID-19 Tests are Free**

Don't assume that your COVID-19 test will be free. Many of the sites sponsored by the Federal Government will be free to Americans. However, especially when a rapid onsite test is being performed, it's best to ask ahead if there will be a charge for the COVID-19 test. COVID-19 testing in the United States is generally set up for analysis to be done at a laboratory. Having said this, there are sites that perform rapid testing for free. It's always best to ask, to avoid surprise bills.

Before you obtain a COVID-19 test at an urgent care, be sure to ask if an office copay will be applied. The COVID-19 test may be free, however the urgent care may charge for an office visit. For travelers that need a rapid COVID-19 test, an office visit fee may be appropriate. There are certainly private testing providers that offer testing for a fee. Again, in situations where the traveler has waited to obtain a test, a “fee for service” COVID-19 test may be appropriate.

Our advice is always to ask if there will be costs associated with the COVID-19 test before your specimen is collected.

5.) **Get a Vaccine**

While being fully vaccinated won't meet the COVID-19 testing requirement for travel, it's simply the best thing Americans can do to protect themselves and their community against the virus. Even with the vaccine, Americans should test to ensure that they are disease-free. So get the vaccine. Then get tested before you travel.

“Our tips are best practices and come from a common-sense standpoint. We closely monitor all the questions that arrive in our call center. We want all Americans to have as much information as possible before they travel to ensure their summer trips go smoothly,” said May. “Travelers can turn to the CDC for the official recommendations. Talk to airlines and cruise ship operators, and double check the entry requirements for international travel. There are many resources for Americans to get a COVID-19 test today. One option is eTrueNorth's www.doineedacovid19test.com.”

Another important thing to know when getting a COVID-19 test for travel is to understand generally how the process works.

- Typically, individuals must schedule an appointment for specimen collection. There may or may not be a line to get an appointment. Don't assume you will get a same-day appointment. Plan ahead. Arrive to your scheduled appointment on time. You don't want to lose your place in line because you arrived late to your appointment.

- When you arrive at the testing site, a specimen will be collected for analysis. This can be either a nose swab or saliva.
- For testing performed at an offsite laboratory, that specimen must be shipped to the laboratory.
- For rapid onsite testing, the analysis will be complete in about 15 to 20 minutes.
- Once the analysis is done, the result will be digitally uploaded for the individual to obtain result. Typically, the individual will need to remember the username and password they created when they scheduled the appointment. They will use these same login credentials to obtain results.

A great resource is the CDC website, where they offer advice on international travel:

- **International Travel During COVID-19** - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/international-travel-during-covid19.html>
- **Requirement for Proof of Negative COVID-19 Test or Recovery from COVID-19 for All Air Passengers Arriving in the United States** - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html>

eTrueNorth is in the forefront of public health initiatives. In April 2020, eTrueNorth began its participation in the drive-through COVID-19 testing site program in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. With 700 sites across the country, eTrueNorth has responded by enabling nearly 2 million COVID-19 tests over the last six months. In the future, eTrueNorth will continue to support COVID-19 tests. eTrueNorth is working to implement its infrastructure for other public health concerns, such as HIV and Hep C testing, as well as for maintenance of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Proven strategies and clinical expertise prepare the company to address public health concerns, known and unknown.

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