

March 11, 2020

Tips and Suggestions for Foth Travelers

Every year we deal with the influenza season. Compounding this, now we have the added complexity of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We have assembled a number of “best practices” reported by the medical community on how to deal with communicable diseases during travel. We are passing along for your review, in addition to your own due diligence, on how to stay safe during this trying period.

1. Are there basic good hygiene practices that reduce my risk of CoVID and influenza? Why is it important to avoid touching my face?

According to the CDC, virus’s (flu and CoVID-19) can be propagated person-to-person through touching virus laden droplets from an infected person. These droplets are currently thought to dwell on hard surface material (countertops, door handles, faucets, bubbler actuators and the like) for 6 to 12 hours. It’s transmittal from surface droplet germs to another person’s eyes, nose or mouth that connects the infected to the uninfected. Hands to the face is the greatest contributor.

2. How do I minimize the risk of virus infection from touching my face with my hands?

Two approaches: Consciously practice NOT touching your face (easier said than done, we know). Importantly, routinely washing and sanitizing hands acts like a circuit breaker to infection: in the event a person touches his or her face, the hands that touch are clean.

View a video for more background on germ propagation education [“Classroom Experiment Reveals Just How Quickly Germs Can Spread Video - ABC News”](#)

View a video for information on making hand sanitizer [“Can’t find hand sanitizer? The World Health Organization has a recipe to make your own”](#). (We rely on WHO for effectiveness evaluation.)

3. What is controlled environment?

An environment about which the traveler **has knowledge** that steps have been taken to sanitize hard surfaces upon which germ laden droplets may be present.

4. How are environments managed to reduce germs associated with viruses?

The occupants take intentional and focused action to be virus absent.
Previous and current occupants are flu and COVID-19 free.
Hard surfaces are treated with sanitizer, to destroy germs should they exist.

5. What are hard surfaces we want to control?

While traveling, a hotel room is an environment we want members to control. Inside that room, examples of surfaces touched during your stay could include, for example, door handle, TV remote, sink counter, coffee pot and pods, shower door handle, closet door, alarm clock, etc. Sanitizing these and other hard surfaces, which may take 5 minutes using a sanitized towelette, is a traveler best practice and helps create a more controlled environment. It is also a best practice to sanitize your iPhone and pen at the same time.

6. How do we maintain control of a sanitized hotel room?

Once occupied, request that the room not receive service. Unaware staff can serve as “propagators” of viruses. Repeat room sanitizing best practices daily.

7. If I’m traveling from one controlled environment (home) to a controlled destination (sanitized hotel room), what other actions should I take to minimize my exposure to virus’s?

The mode of transportation used, and routing chosen can make a difference in member exposure to viruses.

8. What is meant about ‘mode of transportation’?

Again, we are looking for control of our environments. Vehicle travel between controlled environments can be ‘more controlled’ than airport related travel. If renting a vehicle, sanitizing hard surfaces (steering wheel, turn signal stock, gear shift lever, window and door actuators for example), before getting underway, helps to control a vehicle environment

9. What about air travel? How can that environment be ‘controlled’? Is it possible?

Air travel requires a higher awareness due to the number of interacting passengers, and number of hard surfaces. Not knowing the history of either...steps should be taken to address both.

10. What steps should be taken to address interacting with passengers?

If possible, choose airport and connecting hubs that minimize passenger travel. Be aware of the local history of flu and COVID-19 activity. Try to choose airports that have a low history of local virus activity if that data is available. Also, be aware of ‘modes of people movement’ inside of an airport. Escalators have hard surfaces which are touched, as do elevators. Trams have hard surfaces and close proximity people. Walking and maintaining hula-hoop distances from others may address both. A best practice is avoiding all airport transactions, and if transactions are necessary, handling those transactions in a method to reduce risk of propagation.

11. What is meant by reducing ‘transactions’ as a method to reduce risk of propagation?

All airport transactions (ticketing, boarding pass, food and beverage purchases etc.)...and the lack of a controlled environment that comes with them...can be minimized or avoided with planning. Restaurants have high passenger interchange and hard surfaces (remember, the objective is to minimize interacting with other passengers). Plan to eat prior to your trip and carry your favorite snack. Beverage (lounge/bars) have high passenger interchange and hard surfaces (e.g., bar tops, glasses, credit card exchanges, placing your personal items on the bar, brushing your shirtsleeves against stool armrests). Fill water bottles from touchless fountains. When scanning an app for boarding, avoid the desk agent taking your phone or boarding pass. Then avoid touching the hard scanner surface. Many other passengers have interacted with that surface during the day.

12. How about best practices at the gate?

Prior to boarding, manage your distance or adjacency to other passengers. Exposure to viruses....both flu and CoViD-19...can be minimized by ‘social distancing’. Be conscious of this at an airport gate, maintain your hula-hoop distance if you can. The sum of your hula-hoop and an adjacent passenger’s hula-hoop is the separation goal: greater than 1 meter, per the WHO. It is, however, recognized that this is not always practical or possible...but...the good news is that the overwhelming majority of people don’t have a virus. Also, Delta, for instance, has hand sanitizer available at the gate. It is a best practice to use it.

Source: [Social Distancing](#) – various remarks from Dr Anthony Fauci, National Institute of Health including: Social Distancing not yet needed nationwide to fight Coronavirus

13. What about the aircraft basic practices?

Similar to vehicles, we are looking for control of our immediate seating environment. In the course of a travel day, your seat has interacted with passengers, and has a number of adjacent hard surfaces. Not knowing the history of either...steps should be taken to address both. Sanitizing hard surfaces ideally before....but certainly as....you are seated is a best practice: armrests, seatbelt buckles, tray tables (both sides), entertainment screens for instance are all included. Efforts not to “transact” while on the plane are best practices. This means avoiding contact with surfaces or items you have not sanitized. Gloved flight attendants protect transmittal to the flight attendant....while the surface of the gloves may still allow propagation of germs from passenger to passenger.

For video demonstration of basic aircraft practices, see NBC Nightly News March 8, 2020, [How to Stay Healthy When Flying Amid Coronavirus Concerns](#)

14. What about sneezing or coughing fellow passengers?

Social distancing is preferred. A basic practice here: ask to be moved to a different seat. As of March 8, the CDC considers the risk of exposure to COVID-19 virus to be low.

15. Should I wear gloves when I travel?

You may make a decision to do so. Two attributes of gloves that are desirable: gloves have fewer crevices than hands and are easier to sanitize or wash....and.... glove-enclosed hands provide a telltale signal if the wearer mistakenly touches their face. Vinyl and latex gloves are inexpensive and readily available at home improvement stores in household cleaning and painting departments.

16. What if I have concerns about traveling for work purposes?

If you choose to opt out of business travel for an interim period, the company will support you to the best of our ability. Please talk to your RCM about making necessary arrangements. Advanced notice of your concerns will help us plan and support you and our clients during this trying time.

Additional Sources:

Center for Disease Control: www.CDC.gov

World Health Organization: www.WHO.int

National Institute of Health: www.NIH.gov