

IATA welcomes easing mask requirements in Europe



IATA Director General Willie Walsh praised EASA for giving travelers "freedom of choice on whether to wear a mask"

The [International Air Transport Association](#) (IATA) today welcomed new guidance from the [European Aviation Safety Agency](#) (EASA) removing its recommendation that masks should be required inflight. The European Union lifted the requirement, which will go into effect May 16.

EASA's updated Aviation Health Safety Protocol, published May 11, calls for the mandatory mask rule to be relaxed where rules have been relaxed for other transport modes.

"This important shift reflects the high levels of vaccination, natural immunity levels, and the removal of domestic restrictions in many European nations," said a release from IATA. The updated guidance also acknowledges the need to move from an emergency situation to a more sustainable mode of managing COVID-19.

"We welcome EASA's recommendation to relax the mask mandate, which is another important step along the road back to normality for air passengers. Travelers can look forward to freedom of choice on whether to wear a mask. And they can travel with confidence knowing that many features of the aircraft cabin, such as high frequency air exchange and high efficiency filters, make it one of the safest indoor environments," said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General.

Several jurisdictions still maintain mask requirements presenting a challenge for airlines and passengers flying between destinations with different requirements.

“We believe that mask requirements on board aircraft should end when masks are no longer mandated in other parts of daily life, for example theatres, offices or on public transport. Although the European protocol comes into effect next week, there is no globally consistent approach to mask-wearing on board aircraft. Airlines must comply with the regulations applicable to the routes they are operating. The aircraft crew will know what rules apply and it is critical that passengers follow their instructions. And we ask that all travelers be respectful of other people’s decision to voluntarily wear masks even if it not a requirement,” said Walsh.