

FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA

COVID POLICY

September 2023; Updated June 2024

So-called COVID “restrictions” have been easing for some time but the possibility of severe health impairment (long COVID, etc. - even death) remains – especially in the most vulnerable populations, i.e. those over age 65 (a category into which many/most Friendship Force members fall.)

FFNCA seeks to minimize risk to our members as well as everyone involved* in our journeys and other club activities. While we are disinclined to impose actual rules about COVID, we do ask that visiting ambassadors, hosts and participants approach all our activities with a full sense of the responsibility we have to each other. This involves advance backup plans in case COVID or other health issues arise, honesty about risks and exposures, and proactive behaviors to keep others safe.

*inbound and outbound journey hosts and ambassadors and participants of any sort in any FFFNCA activities, henceforth referred to simply as “participants.”

Vaccinations: We ask that all participants be vaccinated to the latest recommendations of the CDC or World Health Organization.

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines/advice>

COVID Testing: we ask that each participant have at their disposal (bring on a journey or purchase on arrival) at least one home COVID testing kit so they can test readily if symptoms arise. Additional kits are easily purchased from any pharmacy in the US. (outbound groups should check on availability in the destination country.) IF YOU DISPLAY ANY SYMPTOMS, PLEASE TEST! BY JOINING ONE OF OUR JOURNEYS, OR HOME OR DAY HOSTING, YOU ARE AGREEING THAT YOU WILL TAKE A COVID TEST IF YOU ARE DISPLAYING ANY SYMPTOMS AND IF A JOURNEY COORDINATOR, YOUR HOME HOST OR YOUR AMBASSADOR REQUESTS IT. And that you will report the results to the person who requested the test.

Masks: We ask that all participants have a mask at their disposal at all times for use whenever risk appears. E.g. closely packed indoor situations or if someone starts coughing in a large outdoor group.

COVID Case: If someone tests positive or displays symptoms that suggest COVID, they should

- self-isolate from the group immediately
- Contact the journey coordinator so all others can be informed

- Be prepared to arrange alternate housing (pay for a hotel if necessary) to protect the rest of the group
- Consult a healthcare practitioner for advice. Consider getting a prescription for an antiviral, such as Paxlovid.

Exposure: If someone has been exposed to a known COVID case, they should

- COVID test immediately and repeat testing every other day for at least five days, per CDC recommendations
- Wear a mask around others until sure they haven't been infected – ten days per the CDC.
- Maintain a distance from others if participating in group activities
- Be on the lookout for symptoms (see below)

Symptoms: It is important to respect symptoms, which include cough, fever or chills, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, diarrhea. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>) If symptomatic a person should:

- COVID test twice 48 hours apart, per CDC recommendations
- Wear a mask around others until they are sure they don't have COVID.
- Maintain a distance from others if participating in group activities.

Health insurance:

- It is mandatory that all participants in our inbound and outbound journeys maintain or purchase health insurance that covers COVID expenses as well as any other health expenses that arise during the journey.

Other Club Policies: In the event the FFNCA COVID policy differs from that of a club we are visiting or one that is visiting us, we will honor the more restrictive of the two policies.
