COVID-19 Information note on health measures and border controls

This information note complements the verbal notes and circular communications sent by the Swiss Mission and the FDFA Protocol in relation to the measures taken by the Swiss authorities to combat the spread of the coronavirus (covid-19). It summarizes the rules applicable to international passenger traffic arising from the COVID-19 Ordinance on Measures to Combat the Coronavirus in International Passenger Transport, in particular the requirements for data collection, testing and quarantine.

This information is mainly intended for persons expected in an official capacity at a diplomatic or consular representation, a permanent mission/representation/delegation or an international organization (hereafter institutional beneficiaries). It concerns mainly:

- staff members and persons authorized to accompany them;
- State delegates or other official representatives, personally invited by one of the above-mentioned entities.

1. Data collection

All travelers coming from a State or area with a high risk of infection, irrespective of the means of transport used, must enter their contact details when entering Switzerland. The contact details can be recorded electronically before starting a journey here or in writing on the entry form provided upon arrival in Switzerland. This obligation also applies to persons entering Switzerland from any other state or area if entry is by train, bus, boat or plane.

2. Molecular biology analysis test for Sars-CoV-2 (PCR test)

Travel by airplane

- All air travelers flying to Switzerland, regardless of where they are travelling from, must present a negative PCR test at the time of boarding, and upon request on arrival. The test must be carried out within 72 hours prior to entry into Switzerland or a rapid immunological test carried out within 24 hours before entering Switzerland with negative results.

Travel by other means of transport

- Travelers coming from a State or area with a high risk of infection at any time during the 10 days prior to their entry into Switzerland must present upon request, on departure or arrival, a negative PCR test carried out within 72 hours prior to entry into Switzerland.

Children under age 12 are not subject to the testing requirement and do not need proof of a negative test result.

Persons subject to mandatory PCR testing who cannot present a negative test result when entering Switzerland must, immediately upon arrival and in agreement with the competent cantonal authority, be tested at their own expense either by means of a PCR test or by means of a rapid test for SARS-CoV-2.

In the absence of a negative test result, airlines may nevertheless allow persons of Swiss nationality or holders of a Swiss residence permit - including a legitimization card issued by the FDFA - to board flights to Switzerland.

\[^{1}\text{The adaptations of the Ordinance will only be visible from 8 February 2021.}\]
Switzerland if they are unable to produce a negative PCR test in good time or without disproportionate effort; such persons must complete a declaration confirming this impossibility. This is particularly the case if the test requires a journey of several hours or if the local testing facilities need several hours to deliver the test result, so that it is not possible to provide a test within the required time.

3. **Quarantine**

**Submission of a negative test does not exempt from the quarantine requirement.**

Travelers coming from a State or area with a high risk of infection at any time during the 10 days prior to their entry into Switzerland must undergo a period of quarantine. They are required to go to their home or other suitable accommodation immediately after entering Switzerland. They must remain there permanently for a period of 10 days after entry into Switzerland.

Persons subject to the quarantine period must notify the competent cantonal authorities of their entry into Switzerland within 2 days and follow their instructions (see links to cantonal sites at the end of the document).

*Early termination of the quarantine period*

The person under quarantine may, at the earliest on the 7th day of quarantine, be re-tested at his or her own expense by means of a rapid antigen test or a PCR test. In the event of a negative result, they may terminate the quarantine without prior authorization from the competent cantonal authority. Persons whose quarantine is terminated early in this way are required to wear a mask outside their home until the end of the 10-day period.

A person showing symptoms of covid-19 should be placed in isolation, unless these symptoms can be attributed to another cause.

It is recommended that persons from states and zones with a high risk of covid-19 infection who do not have permanent residence in Switzerland should postpone their journey. Likewise, it is not advisable to travel to high-risk States and areas.

4. **Cross-border regions**

Regions bordering Switzerland are excluded from the list of State or area with a high risk of infection. Persons moving in a cross-border area are thus not subject to the obligation to collect data, PCR testing and quarantine when travelling to Switzerland.

However, if they return from a stay in a state or area with a high risk of infection, they are strongly advised to postpone their entry into Swiss territory for a period of 10 days, respectively to work from home. Persons residing in a cross-border area are also required to comply with the regulations applicable in the State they reside in.

5. **Exemptions to quarantine and PCR test**

Exemptions to the requirement to quarantine or to PCR test are provided in accordance with article 8 of the COVID-19 Ordinance on Measures to Combat the Coronavirus in International Passenger Transport, including for persons:

1. whose work is essential to maintain the efficiency of institutional beneficiaries as defined in Art. 2, par. 1 of the Host State Act (art. 8, al. 1, let. a, ch. 3). These exemptions must be requested according to the procedure explained below, to the Swiss Mission to the UN in Geneva for multilateral affairs or to the FDFA Protocol in Bern for bilateral affairs;
2. whose work is essential to maintain the efficiency of Swiss diplomatic and consular relations (art. 8, al. 1, let a, ch. 4);
3. who enter Switzerland for compelling professional or medical reasons and whose visit cannot be postponed (art. 4, al. 1, let. d);
4. who re-enter Switzerland after a stay in a country or area with an increased risk of infection for compelling professional or medical reasons which could not be postponed. (art. 8, al. 1, let. d);
5. who re-enter Switzerland after participating in an event in a country or area with an increased risk of infection, provided they prove that their participation and stay took place in compliance with a specific precautionary measures plan; participating in an event includes in particular participating, normally in a professional capacity, in a sports competition or cultural event, or in a professional conference (art. 8, al. 1, let. g);

6. who can provide proof that they have already contracted the SARS-CoV-2 in the last three months before entering Switzerland and that they are considered cured (art. 8, al. 1, let. h);

7. persons with a medical certificate proving that, for medical reasons, they cannot undergo a PCR test (Art. 8, para. 1bis, let. b).

**PCR test**
The requirement for a PCR test will, in principle, not be subject to derogations, as it is considered to be a measure that does not affect the conduct of official duties.

**Quarantine**
Persons covered by number 1 above must apply for a quarantine exemption (see procedure below).

Persons benefiting from an exemption from quarantine in accordance with numbers 3 to 5 above must be able to submit, at the request of the competent authority, documents from their employer certifying that their professional or medical imperative cannot be postponed. **These persons are not required to announce their arrival to the cantonal authorities.**

In any case, it is further specified that the exemption from quarantine only applies for compelling **professional reason** in application of all protective measures (distance, facial mask, hygiene rules) and does not allow other activities to be carried out (e.g. no leisure activities, sightseeing or festive outings).

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6. **Procedure for requesting an exemption from the quarantine for official reasons**

Only requests for exemption according to point n° 1 and 2 above (art. 4, al. 1, let. b, ch. 3 and 4) must be submitted by Note Verbale respectively to the Swiss Mission to the UN for multilateral affairs (geneve.visa@eda.admin.ch) and to the FDFA Protocol for bilateral affairs (www.eda.admin.ch/protocole), at least 5 working days before the planned travel date. The latter note will specify:

- The country or zone of origin of the person;
- The dates of stay in, or return to Switzerland;
- For persons based in Switzerland: a description of the circumstances justifying the essential nature of their physical presence at work for the continued functioning of the concerned institutional beneficiary;
- For delegates to meetings/conferences: title, function, role held in the meeting, number of people in the delegation. In such cases, an exemption may be considered provided that the visit cannot be replaced by virtual meetings or by the participation of diplomatic personnel already based in Geneva. Where appropriate, the size of the delegation should be reduced to the strict minimum.

**The examination of requests for exemption is extremely restrictive** in view of the precautionary recommendations issued by the competent health authorities. Thus, requests for exemption for family members are not, in principle, accepted. If justified special interests so require, private requests for exemption may be submitted to the competent cantonal authority.
7. Derogations requests for compelling private reasons

If justified special interests so require, requests for derogations for private reasons may be addressed to the competent cantonal authority:

Basel: epi@bs.ch
Bern: info.gsi@be.ch
Geneva: derogation.covid@etat.ge.ch
Vaud: quarantaine.covid19@vd.ch (requests are processed during weekdays only. In case of emergency during non-working days, call 0800 316 00 between 8 a.m and 6 p.m.)

8. Persons in transit

Persons who, as transit\(^2\) passengers, have stayed less than 24 hours in a State or area with a high risk of infection (art. 8, al. 1, let. e) are not subject to a quarantine obligation upon their return to Switzerland.

Persons who enter Switzerland only to cross it, with the intention and possibility of continuing their journey directly to another country (Art. 8 para. 1 letter f. of the above-mentioned Ordinance), are not subject to the quarantine obligation, nor to the PCR test, nor to the obligation to collect data (Art. 3 para. 3. of the above-mentioned Ordinance).

Further information about quarantine and PCR tests are also available at the following websites:

Geneva  
https://www.ge.ch/covid-19-voyageurs-quarantaine

Vaud  

Bern  
www.be.ch/corona

Basel  
https://www.coronavirus.bs.ch/

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\(^2\) By transit, it is understood that the person does not leave the international transit zone of the airport concerned. Going to a risk area and returning within 24 hours is not considered transit.