

COVID tests for fully jabbed travellers to England to be scrapped from 11 February

COVID tests for fully vaccinated travellers arriving in England are being scrapped.

Starting at 4am on 11 February, there will be no requirement for vaccinated passengers to do post-arrival lateral flow tests, said Transport Secretary Grant Shapps.

The change will be in time for the half-term break.

“That means that after months of pre-departure testing, post-arrival testing, self-isolation, additional expense, all that fully vaccinated people will now have to do, when they travel to the UK, is to verify their status via a passenger locator form,” Mr Shapps told MPs.

He said “fully vaccinated” means two doses of an approved vaccination or one dose of a Janssen vaccine.

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The transport secretary also said that “passengers who do not qualify as fully vaccinated will no longer be required to do a day eight test after arrival, or indeed to self-isolate.

“They will still need to fill out a passenger locator form to demonstrate proof of a negative Covid test taken two days before they travel and they must still take a post-arrival PCR test.”

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It comes after the chief executives of the UK's largest airlines urged the government to end coronavirus-related travel restrictions.

The bosses pointed to evidence that the Omicron variant is in retreat, and argued that current measures have a “limited effect” in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

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Image:

The airline industry saw huge cancellations as Omicron hit the UK in December

Earlier in the day, Boris Johnson had said: “We have, thanks to the tough decisions, the big calls that we made... the most open economy and society in Europe.”

Speaking to broadcasters during a visit to the Academic Centre, Milton Keynes Hospital, the prime minister said: “And although we have to be cautious, we are now moving through the Omicron wave, and you can see the figures are starting to get better.

“So what we’re doing on travel, to show that this country is open for business, open for travellers, you will see changes so that people arriving no longer have to take tests if they have been vaccinated, if they have been double vaccinated.”

Johan Lundgren, easyJet's chief executive, said: "We welcome this news knowing that millions of our customers will also be delighted to see the return of restriction-free travel in the UK. We now look ahead to what we believe will be a strong summer.

"We believe testing for travel should now firmly become a thing of the past. It is clear travel restrictions did not materially slow the spread of Omicron in the UK and so it is important that there are no more knee-jerk reactions to future variants.

"We commend the government for removing all testing. easyJet plans to return to near 2019 levels of flying this summer and so we can't wait to welcome our customers back onboard."



Image:

Airlines have been campaigning for tests for travellers to be scrapped

From Thursday, COVID passports and the mandatory wearing of face masks are being scrapped in England – and people are no longer being told to work from home.

Speaking to Sky News, the World Health Organisation's special

envoy for COVID, Dr David Nabarro, described the virus as “very nasty and rather cunning” – and said it should not be treated like the flu.

Warning that coronavirus remains “very, very dangerous”, he added: “It can also mutate and form variants and we’ve seen several but we know there are more not far away.”