

Rules for international arrivals relaxed; vaccination not a must

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- **The guidelines are being revised amid a sustained decline in covid-19 infections**

India has relaxed norms for international arrivals in view of declining covid-19 trajectory in the country. As per the new guidelines, the government has scrapped the requirement of Air Suvidha for arriving international passengers and vaccination certificate is not mandatory.

“The present guidelines are being revised in light of sustained decline in covid-19 trajectory and significant advances being made in covid-19 vaccination coverage both globally as well as in India,” the guidelines from the ministry of health and family welfare stated.

The self-declaration form of Air Suvidha was launched in August 2020 for arriving international passengers. The government had mandated flyers to submit complete and factual information in the self-declaration form on the online Air Suvidha portal before the scheduled travel, including last 14 days travel. Travellers were also required to submit details of negative covid-19 RT-PCR report conducted within 72 hours of the journey or submit details of full primary vaccination schedule of covid-19 vaccination.

The government had also mandated airlines to allow boarding by only those passengers who have filled in all the information in the self declaration form on the Air Suvidha portal. This form was also required to be shown at the point of entry in India.

The latest guidelines, which come into effect from 22 November, state that all travellers planning for international travel to India should “preferably” be fully vaccinated as per the approved primary schedule of vaccination against covid-19 in their home country.

During international flights and travel, the government has reiterated that there will be announcements about the ongoing covid-19 pandemic including precautionary measures to be followed but the use of masks will be “preferable” and will not be mandatory.

“Passengers will heave a sigh of relief as the Air Suvidha form requirement often led to an unpleasant travel experience for flyers, especially for elders travelling alone. This is expected to further drive the international tourism in the country as travellers prefer the destinations where the entry process is smooth and hassle-free,” a travel portal executive said.