

As Covid-19 variants escalate, face masks on airplanes are changing

A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : Did you know that each airline has the ability to determine not just if a face mask must be worn but also what kind of face mask must be worn when onboard a flight?

More and more airlines are starting to ban face masks made out of fabric, citing that they are not a quality barrier against the spread of COVID-19, especially in light of the extreme surge of new cases every day around the world due to the Delta variants. They are instead requiring surgical masks, N95 masks, valve-free FFP2 masks, or FFP3 respirator masks.

So far, Lufthansa, Air France, LATAM, and Finnair have banned fabric face masks as well as masks that have exhaust valves. Think about it. A mask with an exhaust is like a car with exhaust. It's fine for the driver (or in this case the wearer), but what about everyone outside that exhaust? A mask is not a mask is not a mask.

Recently, Finnair became the latest carrier to ban fabric face masks onboard, accepting only surgical masks, valve-free FFP2 or FFP3 respirator masks, and N95 masks, the company tweeted.

Airlines requiring medical masks - at least 3 layers thick -are Air France and Lufthansa. LATAM will also allow KN95 and N95 masks. And as an extra precaution, for passengers connecting in Lima, they must double up and add on another mask.

The reason for that is because right now Peru has the highest COVID-19 death rate in the world.

In the United States, most airlines allow cloth face masks but have banned certain other types of face coverings like bandanas, scarves, ski masks, gaiters, balaclavas, masks with holes or slits of any kind, masks with exhaust valves, or even cloth masks if they are only made from one single layer of material. Some people are into wearing plastic face shields, but in the case of United Airlines, they say that's not enough coverage and still requires a face mask on top of the face shield. On American Airlines, they do not allow masks that are connected to tubing or battery-operated filters.

The US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) had issued a mandatory face mask requirement when traveling on all public transportation, including airplanes and in airports, in January 2021. This mandate was due to expire on September 13, 2021, however, with the new surge in COVID-19 cases due to the Delta Variants, the mandate has been extended to run through January 18, 2022.