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FAQ for Confirmation of Certificate of testing for COVID-19 (for Airlines)

1 If some of the personal information, such as passport number, is not included on the certificate, is it invalid?

Even if the certificate does not contain all of the personal information specified in the predetermined format, a holder of the certificate can be accepted for boarding as long as the passenger's identity can be confirmed by comparing the name and date of birth with the passport.

2 If the doctor's name is not listed, will it be invalid?

Certificates issued by the following countries/regions may be accepted for boarding even if the doctor's name is not listed:

Eswatini, Republic of Seychelles, Chile, Germany, Burkina Faso, Burundi, United States, Republic of South Africa, Lesotho, Jamaica

3 If a valid specimen and test method are not listed, is it invalid?

The certificate will not be valid if it does not contain a valid specimen or test method.

For example, if the certificate states "Throat swab", "Nasal and throat swab" as the specimen, then it is invalid.

For more information on specimens and testing methods that can be accepted as valid certificates, please refer to the Guidance "Requirements for Test Certificates Required for Entry into Japan" (hereinafter referred to as the Guidance).

As required, based on information from Japanese overseas establishments abroad etc., we will change the specimens and testing methods that are considered valid. In this case, we will update the Guidance and notify you of it. Please make a decision on whether or not the certificate is valid based on the latest version of the Guidance.

However, if the certificates which have no description about specimen are issued by the government of Bangladesh or Brunei, it can be accepted for boarding as a valid certificate because those governments state publicly that only “nasopharyngeal swab” is used as a specimen.

4 Why are "nasopharyngeal swab", "saliva", "nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swab" as well as "nasal swab" (only on Nucleic acid amplification test(e.g. PCR test)) the only specified specimens for testing?

The specimens required for the certificate at the time of entry into Japan are the same as the specimens recommended for testing asymptomatic persons in Japan. The recommended specimens for testing asymptomatic persons are listed in the Guidelines for Testing for Pathogens of Novel Coronavirus Infections (<https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/000747986.pdf>), and currently include "nasopharyngeal swabs", “saliva” and "nasal swab" (only on nucleic acid amplification test(e.g. PCR test)). Among them, “nasal swabs” (only on nucleic acid amplification test) has been added to the list of valid specimens for travelers arriving in Japan after midnight (Japan time) on March 9, 2022, as a valid specimen for pre-departure testing of travelers to Japan.

In addition, "nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swab" has been added to the list of valid specimens for travelers arriving in Japan after midnight (Japan time) on July 1, 2021, following an approval by the Council of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare(the MHLW) on June 25, 2021, as a valid specimen for pre-departure testing of travelers to Japan.

5 How do you handle a certificate that only states the date of specimen collection, but not the time of specimen collection?

Even if only the date of specimen collection is written, if it can be clearly confirmed that the scheduled departure time of the flight is within 72 hours of the collection, it is acceptable to allow boarding.

6 What happens if a flight is cancelled or delayed significantly on the day of departure, and the passenger has to leave the country after 72 hours?

It is considered burdensome for the passenger to be required to re-obtain the certificate due to circumstances not attributable to the passenger. If the flight after the change is within 96 hours

from the date and time of specimen collection, it is not necessary to obtain the certificate again and the passenger may board the aircraft.

7 For example, what will be done if a passenger has an inadequate certificate when connecting to another company's flight (e.g., if the passenger concerned is expected to get stuck in the airport)?

If the passenger is a Japanese national, please contact the Japanese overseas establishments that has jurisdiction over the location of the airport, as necessary. If the passenger is a foreign national, please contact the diplomatic mission of his/her country of nationality.

8. What happens to the travel history when transiting through the U.S., since it is required by the domestic law in the U.S. to go through immigration procedures, with some exemptions?

If the purpose of your stopover is transition, and as long as you remain stay in the airport, including staying at the hotel located inside the airport, the transition country (the U.S.) will not be included in your travel history. However, in case you go out of the airport, or stay at the hotel located outside of the airport, the transition country (the U.S.) will be included in your travel history.

9. When will be the starting point of counting “72 hours before departure” on the following transition cases?

Case A transiting through a country without immigration procedures

Case B transiting through a country where immigration procedures are required by the domestic law

For the case A, the starting point to count “72 hours before departure” will be the time you leave a country from which the passenger originally departed.

For the case B, if you go out of the airport, or stay at the hotel located outside of the airport upon transition, the starting point to count “72 hours before departure” will be the time you leave a transit country you originally departed. Therefore, if 72 hours have passed since you obtained a certificate at a departure country before you leave the transit country, you need to be tested again to obtain a certificate in the transit country.

However, if you stay in the airport upon transition, the starting point to count “72 hours before departure” will be the time you leave a departure country, which means you are not required to obtain a certificate again at a transition country.

For example, if you travel from Sweden to Japan, transiting through Germany, the starting point to count “72 hours before departure” will be the departure time from the airport of Sweden. If you travel from Brazil to Japan, transiting through Mexico and the U.S.(which requires immigration procedures), the starting point to count “72 hours before departure” will be the departure time from the airport of Brazil, only if you don’t go out of the airport upon transition through the U.S.

10. In some countries, including the U.S., countries/regions designated in response to coronavirus variants of special concern on border measures is designated on a state-by-state basis. When transiting domestically within the U.S. to travel to Japan, will transiting state be included in the travel history? And when will be the starting point of counting “72 hours before departure” in this case?

Upon transition inside the U.S. by air, the transition state will not be included in the travel history as long as the passenger stays in the airport, and the starting point to count “72 hours before departure” will be the time he/she leaves the departure state.

When transiting across several states by land, those states will not be included in the travel history as long as the purpose of the transit is departure to Japan. However, if he/she stays at the hotel on the way, the state of stay will be included in the travel history. In this case, the starting point to count “72 hours before departure” will be the time of departure of the flight to Japan.

11 Do children also need to obtain a certificate?

We request that children also obtain a certificate.

However, in consideration of the fact that many countries do not test preschool-aged children as part of their system, children (generally under the age of 6) do not need to have a certificate, as long as they are accompanied by caregivers, including parents who obtain negative testing certificates.

12 Is the prescribed format of the MHLW the only valid form of certificate? Is there any other valid format?

In order to avoid confusion in places such as airport check-in counters, it is recommended that travelers use the format prescribed by the MHLW. This recommendation has been informed to prospective travelers through the websites or mails of Japanese embassies and consulates in addition to the MHLW's website.

In addition, when using a format other than the prescribed format due to unavoidable circumstances in each country or region, it may take some time for verification at the time of boarding procedures and landing in Japan.

For travelers who have no choice but to use a format other than the prescribed format due to unavoidable circumstances in a departure country or region, the submission of an optional format is not precluded. Nonetheless, the items to be included in the testing certificate must be satisfied.

13 Will the certificate that does not use the prescribed format be regarded as valid, if the prescribed format which contains the information lacking is attached?

When attaching the prescribed format, which contains the information lacking, to the certificate that does not use the prescribed format, please make sure that the specific number (test number, specimen number, etc.) on the certificate is mentioned in the "Remarks" column of the prescribed format, in order to link the two documents. Please be aware that the attached prescribed format also requires a signature of the doctor who issued the certificate.

14 If a certificate that does not use the prescribed format is not written in English or Japanese, is it invalid?

If the certificate is written in languages other than English or Japanese, it will be considered invalid, because the Japanese authorities cannot determine the contents of the certificate. However, if an English or Japanese translation of the certificate is attached and the contents of the certificate can be determined, it can be regarded as valid one.

Please be aware that penalties may be applied in accordance with the Japanese Quarantine Law if a false translation is attached in order to make it falsely appear as if the certificate were valid.

15 In addition to the Japanese-English bilingual format, please prepare the MHLW's prescribed format in other languages as well.

In addition to the existing prescribed format written in both Japanese and English, we have prepared the following language versions. Additional languages will be added in the future as needed. These formats will be announced on the websites of Japanese diplomatic mission overseas and through consular e-mail, etc. Please treat the prescribed format with these languages as valid:

Arabic, Italian, Indonesian, Ukrainian, Urdu, Dutch, Korean, Spanish, Thai, Chinese, German, French, Vietnamese, Persian, Portuguese, Russian,

If you are traveling from China to Japan, you will need to submit an "Inspection Declaration" based on the certificate.

16 Is an electronically issued testing certificate valid?

In order to avoid confusion in place such as airport check-in counters, it is encouraged that travelers present the MHLW's prescribed format in paper form.

However, in some cases, due to unavoidable circumstances such as the situation in each country/region or the time constraints of the person concerned, it may not be possible to obtain a paper copy of an testing certificate, so it is acceptable to present an electronically issued testing certificate (hereinafter referred to as "electronic testing certificate") when boarding an aircraft or entering Japan.

A testing certificate in an electronic format shall be treated as a valid testing certificate if it can be presented as an attachment to an e-mail or displayed items on mobile terminal using an application, or as a printed document.

Moreover these electronic testing certificates can be treated as valid, only if the items of certificates are visually confirmed and are the same items as on paper testing certificates.

Any format of electronic testing certificate, such as PDF, image, photograph, is acceptable. Nevertheless, testing certificates in a variable media (such as Word, Excel, e-mail text message body) in which the contents can be modified by the applicant are invalid. In addition, if items necessary for confirming the validity of the testing certificate (such as personal information, specimens and test methods) are unclear or blurred, such certificates are also regarded as invalid. You are kindly requested to remind passengers who present electronic testing certificates that Japanese and foreign nationals entering Japan from areas other than those subject to landing refusal will be required to print out or send them to a designated e-mail address for submission

upon entry into Japan, and that foreign nationals entering Japan from areas subject to landing refusal will be required to submit a printed copy at the immigration.

17 Contact for inquiries regarding the handling of certificates

The following is the contact information for airlines regarding certificates.

Office of Quarantine Station Administration, Policy Planning Division for Environmental Health and Food Safety, MHLW

Phone number: +81-3-3595-2333

Hours: 09:00 AM-7:00PM on weekdays, 1:00PM-7:00PM on weekends and holidays

Note: Please do not disclose this information to the general public.

When making inquiries, please keep the date, time, and the name of the Office of Quarantine Station Administration staff member who responded.

While checking the certificate of a passenger, if you are unable to contact the inquiry desk due to out of service hours, please write the name of the airline staff member, together with date and time in the margin of the certificate, along with a note to that effect.

In addition to the aforementioned situation, if the departure of the aircraft is delayed due to the fact that it cannot be determined that the certificate is invalid based on the information provided in this FAQ or the Guidance and the passenger must be allowed to board the aircraft, please write the name of the airline staff member, the date and time in the margin of the certificate, along with a note to the effect that you were unable to contact the inquiry desk.

In the event that the quarantine station does not recognize the validity of the certificate upon arrival, please note that the airline will not be immediately held responsible for this, and the quarantine station will make a decision based on mutual consultation.