

June,10,2022

FAQ for Confirmation of Certificate of testing for COVID-19

1. What information should be included in a certificate of testing for COVID-19?

A certificate is valid as long as all of the following items are satisfied.

- (1) Name, date of birth
- (2) Specimen collected, test method (limited to specimens (Note 1) and test methods (Note 2) that are recognized as valid)
- (3) Result, date and time of specimen collection (Note 3), date of issuance of the certificate
- (4) Name of medical institution

(Note 1) Specimens are valid only if they are one of the followings:

Nasopharyngeal swab

Saliva

Mixture of nasopharyngeal swab and oropharyngeal swab

Nasal swab (limited to nucleic acid amplification test)

(Note 2) The test method is valid only when it is one of the followings:

Nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT: Nucleic Acid Amplification Test)*1

Antigen quantification test (Quantitative Antigen Test (CLEIA, ECLIA, etc.))*2

*1 Nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) includes PCR and LAMP methods.

*2 Not a qualitative antigen test (Qualitative Antigen Test).

(Note 3) The period between the date of specimen collection and the scheduled departure time of the flight must be within 72 hours.

A template prepared by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) that covers all of the above requirements for a certificate can be used. Any certificate made without using the template is also valid as long as it satisfies all of the items mentioned above. When using such optional forms, it may take time to check the certificates during boarding procedures at a departure place and landing procedures in Japan, so we strongly encourage to use the "Fast-Track" method of pre-screening.

As of June 10, 2022, some of the items such as "Passport Number," "Nationality," and "Sex," have been removed from the items to be included in the certificate, and the template (which used to be called "Prescribed Format") has been revised.

Since the new format is a simplified version of the old format, certificates prepared in the old format will continue to be valid. Certificates prepared in the old format without the items removed from the new format, such as passport number, etc. will also be considered valid.

2. If the name and date of birth are not written on a certificate, or if the name and date of birth on the certificate are different from those on the passport, is the certificate invalid?

If the name and date of birth are not written or if the name and date of birth on the certificate are different from those on the passport, the certificate cannot be considered valid in principle because the identity of the applicant cannot be verified. However you can see the personal information such as passport number on the certificate, and if you can confirm the identity from these information, it will be considered valid.

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. However, if the certificates which have no description about specimen are issued by the government of Bangladesh or Brunei, they can be accepted as valid 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 swabs" (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 MHLW on June 25, 2021, as a valid specimen for pre-departure testing of travelers to Japan.

5. What inspection methods are considered valid?

The Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT) and the Quantitative Antigen Test (CLEIA, ECLIA, etc.) are accepted as valid methods of testing for the certificate required at the time of entry into Japan. Nucleic acid amplification tests (NAAT) include PCR, LAMP, TMA, TRC, Smart Amp, NEAR, Next-Generation Sequencing, and other methods that amplify nucleic acids for confirmation.

Please note that the Qualitative Antigen Test (QAT) performed with a simplified kit is not recognized as a valid test method.

6. 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, the certificate can still be accepted as valid in case it can be clearly confirmed that the scheduled departure time of the flight is within 72 hours of the collection.

7. 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?

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 you may board the aircraft.

On the other hand, if the time of departure after the change is over 96 hours from the date and time of specimen collection, you are required to obtain a new certificate from the perspective of quarantine measures. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

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. When will be the starting point of counting “72 hours before departure” ?

For example, even if a passenger travels domestically within the U.S. and transits through an airport in another state within the U.S., if the passenger remains within the transiting airport and does not leave the airport, he/she is not considered to have a history of stay at that location. Therefore, the starting point for the "72 hours before departure" for domestic travel is the time of departure from the first airport of departure. In the case of a domestic flight departing from domestic airport A and departing to Japan via domestic airport B, and if the passenger stays in airport B, the starting point of "72 hours before departure" is the time of departure from airport A, the first airport of departure. If the traveler travels overland through multiple states, and as long as the travel is for the purpose of departing for Japan, he/she will not be considered to have stayed in those states. On the other hand, if he/she stays overnight at a lodging facility during the travel, he/she will be considered to have stayed at that location. In the case of travel by land, the starting point for the "72 hours before departure" is the time the aircraft departed for 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 only the template provided by the MHLW acceptable?

No. Any certificate made without using the template is also valid as long as it satisfies all of the items mentioned above. When using such optional forms, it may take time to check the certificates during boarding procedures at a departure place and landing procedures in Japan, so we strongly encourage to use the "Fast-Track" method of pre-screening.

13. If both an optional form certificate and a certificate using MHLW's template that supplements missing information from the former one (e.g., specimen collection site) are presented, will they be accepted as valid certificates?

If both the optional form certificate and certificate using the MHLW's template that supplements missing information from the former one (e.g., specimen collection site) are presented, there should be no discrepancy between the two certificates. (For example, if the optional form certificates state that the test method is "antigen qualitative test," but in the certificate using MHLW's template "nucleic acid amplification test is checked," discrepancies exist and they are not acceptable.) If combined required, all the items are satisfied, those certificate are accepted as valid. However, to ensure that the two certificates are linked to each other, please make sure that the test number, specimen number, etc. (a number that identifies the certificate as a unique test certificate) listed on the optional form certificate is indicated in the remarks column, etc. of the certificate using MHLW's reference form.

14. If an optional form certificate 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.

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, are there any other language formats?

In addition to the existing Japanese-English format, 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 overseas missions of Japan and through consular e-mail, etc. Please treat the certificates made with these formats of following languages as valid:

Arabic, Italian, Indonesian, Ukrainian, Urdu, Dutch, Korean, Spanish, Thai, Tagalog, Chinese, German, Nepalese, 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?

A certificate, whether in paper (including a copy) or electronic media, is valid as long as it can be verified that all of the items to be included in the certificate are satisfied. However, a certificate will not be valid if the contents can be changed by the applicant (e.g., Word, Excel, e-mail text, etc.) or if the items required to verify the certificate (specimen, test method, etc.) are indistinct.

To avoid confusion at check-in counters and other on-site locations at each airport, we strongly encourage to use the "Fast Track" method of pre-screening.

If you do not use "Fast Track", we request you to use the template provided by the MHLW.