

Prevention Action Change

Building Skills to End Violence

Navigating TSA Pat downs

When a pat down is administered: Generally this is only conducted if you alarm the walk-through metal detector, advanced imaging machine or opt out of these screenings. You can also be randomly selected for a pat down.

What a pat down includes: hands on inspection of the head, neck, torso, arms, legs, and feet. This includes head coverings and sensitive areas such as chest/breasts, groin, and buttocks. These areas are usually inspected with the back of the hand. TSA Officers (TSOs) are required to be courteous and to explain what they are doing and what will happen next. Generally pat downs are conducted by a TSO of the same gender of the passenger. You can also request a TSO of your same gender identity.

Options before or during a pat down:

1. Let the TSO know of any anxiety, aversion to touch, PTSD, or other reason a pat down may be challenging for you.
2. Request the presence of a Supervisor or Passenger Support Specialist (PSS staff have received additional training in supporting passengers with disability, medical, mental health or other needs)
3. Request a private screening – pat down conducted in a private room. You have the right to have a person of your choice with you in the private screening room.

Planning ahead: You can call TSA Cares up to 72 hours before your flight and let them know of concerns around a potential pat down or other flight needs. They will forward that information ahead to the airport and will make sure a Passenger Support Specialist meets you at security and goes through the screening with you. Note this does not mean you will not be selected for a pat down. Call (855) 787-2227 or email: TSA-ContactCenter@dhs.gov

Transgender Travelers: In addition to the above steps, check out www.tsa.gov/transgender-passengers for additional information on identification and packing needs.

A possible exception: TSA does not advertise any options for avoiding a pat down if one is ordered however, if you have TSA Pre Check you *may* be allowed to go back through the Advanced Imaging Machine or Metal Detector to see if the alarm does not sound the 2nd time through.

Adapted from: www.TSA.gov and information from the TSA information line: 1-855-289-9673

www.preventionactionchange.com 207.232.0484 PO Box 10843 Portland, Maine 04102