



Emerging Wisely 2021

Step by Step Together



Government of
Northwest Territories

Updated: June 9, 2021

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Message from the Premier of the Northwest Territories

Through the commitment and sacrifice of NWT residents, communities and businesses, the tireless efforts of essential workers, and the expert guidance of health officials, we have managed the COVID-19 pandemic as a territory with a large degree of success. We have kept our COVID-19 case counts low. There have been few COVID-19 related hospitalizations and no deaths. Unlike many other jurisdictions that have had to go in and out of lockdowns, our residents have been able to eat at local restaurants, go shopping, get a haircut and play sports. We have had a level of stability few other jurisdictions in Canada have been afforded.

Emerging Wisely 2021: Step by Step Together provides more information on how we will get back to doing the things we love – like gathering with friends and families, travelling to other places and having loved ones from far away visit us – while still protecting the people we love. We are entering a new normal.

We know far more about the virus than we did at the start of the pandemic. We have safe and effective vaccines to help prevent serious illness, and we can be confident that we have the capacity to monitor, test and trace new cases to reduce the risk of outbreaks. I am grateful for all of the things that will lead us to getting back to being able to do more of the things we love, and I am mindful that our communities and our territory will need to continue to measure and adapt to the risks of COVID-19.

I, like everyone, look forward to the risks of COVID-19 being further diminished so that we can gather and travel with fewer public health measures. We know that there are still risks beyond our control, including the reality that COVID-19, in its current forms or due to new variants, is likely to be a danger present in the world for some time. *Emerging Wisely 2021: Step by Step Together* recognizes that, although COVID-19 will be with us for a while yet, it is becoming a more manageable threat.

This updated plan describes the elements that will allow our territory to relax public health measures. Achieving high levels of vaccination will be crucial to limiting the severity and frequency of future cases and outbreaks. This is something that we can control, and I encourage all residents who have not already done so to get vaccinated.

I know that this pandemic has affected each and every resident of the NWT in profound ways. We are about to enter a new stage in our pandemic response and the light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter. *Emerging Wisely 2021: Step by Step Together* sets out the risks and helps us all understand the conditions required to emerge safely.

Thank you all for helping to keep our families and communities safe. Together we can defeat COVID-19.

Caroline Cochrane
Premier of the Northwest Territories



Executive Summary

Emerging Wisely 2021: Step by Step Together (Emerging Wisely 2021) outlines the Northwest Territories' (NWT) strategy for safely resuming activities in the NWT.

The response to COVID-19 and decisions to relax measures will be based on:

- Increasing vaccination levels in the NWT and elsewhere.
- Decreasing COVID-19 incidence outside of the NWT and decreased risk of importation of the virus to the NWT.
- Public health information from wastewater surveillance, point of care testing with rapid turn-around time, contact tracing and timely response.
- Maintaining the health care system's capacity to respond to an outbreak.

Emerging Wisely 2021 is moving away from using “phases” towards personal risk mitigation and guidance.

Emerging Wisely 2021 is not about removing the threat of COVID-19, but about understanding and effectively managing our risk to prevent and respond to outbreaks.

We can ease restrictions as conditions and information allow, enhance restrictions as required, and target restrictions as necessary.



Emerging Wisely 2021 sets out four categories that describe overall risk:

- Red  Highest risk – Lowest vaccination coverage
- Orange  High risk – Low vaccination coverage
- Yellow  Moderate risk – Moderate vaccination coverage
- Green  Low risk – High vaccination coverage

NWT's highest risk of an outbreak or community spread is by importation through travellers and evolution of variants of concern.

We will move towards greater openness and the gradual elimination of public health restrictions as we meet milestones, moving from lowest to highest risk activities. If required, our public health measures will allow us to react quickly to enhance or target restrictions should COVID-19 re-emerge.

By taking a careful approach to relaxing restrictions we can preserve the progress we have made together. Getting vaccinated and participating with ongoing public health measures, including self-monitoring and self-isolating responsibly, are the most important things you can do to support our ability to emerge safely.

COVID-19 may be around for a long time. Together, we are learning how to manage our risks, detect threats early on, and rapidly respond and contain any cases quickly without overwhelming our health care system.

Understanding your risk and making informed choices and actions will keep you, your family, friends, community and country safe.

Current Situation

Since the original *Emerging Wisely* was released in 2020, Canada has experienced second and third waves of infections. More dangerous variants of COVID-19 have emerged and the Canadian health care system is still under extraordinary pressure. At the same time, highly effective vaccines are being delivered, and we are learning more about managing and responding to risk from the pandemic every day.

The NWT now has:

- More knowledge about COVID-19 and how it is transmitted.
- Access to COVID-19 vaccines for individuals older than 12 years.
- Wastewater surveillance for COVID-19.
- COVID-19 testing capacity with rapid turnaround times.
- Enhanced contact tracing capacity.

These things help us prevent, detect and respond to any cases of COVID-19 that may occur.



Timeline of COVID-19 Activity in the Northwest Territories

2020

January

Jan 28 – First case in Canada

March

Mar 11 – WHO declares pandemic

Mar 14 – Avoid non-essential travel

Mar 15 – National advisory for returning international travellers to self-isolate

Mar 17 – Avoid gatherings >50

Mar 18 – Public Health Emergency declared in NWT

Mar 20 – First NWT Case

Mar 21 – Incoming NWT travel restricted, ProtectNWT launched, mandatory 14-day isolation for incoming travellers

Mar 22 – All gatherings of any size cancelled

Mar 24 – Schools closed for remainder of term

Mar 25 – Federal *Quarantine Act* in effect

April

Apr 7 – Face coverings recommended

Apr 8 – Launch of compliance and enforcement task force

Apr 10 – Mineral and petroleum industry order in effect

Apr 11 – Public gathering order in effect

Apr 16 – Expanded testing

Apr 17 – 811 implemented

Apr 27 – Essential worker order in effect

May

May 12 – *Emerging Wisely* released

May 15 – *Emerging Wisely* Phase 1 in effect

June

Jun 12 – *Emerging Wisely* Phase 2 in effect, updates to Travel Restriction Order including a Nunavut travel “bubble”

Jun 25 – Amended Mineral and Petroleum Industry Order in effect

July

Jul 16 – Amended travel restrictions

September

Sept 3 – Creation of the COVID Secretariat

Sept 10 – Wastewater sampling announced

November

Nov 19 – Nunavut travel exemptions revoked

December

Dec 9 – Call out for testing those self-isolating between Nov 30-Dec 9 due to positive wastewater sample

Dec 12 – Amended travel restrictions – those sharing accommodations with a traveller

Dec 31 – First vaccinations in NWT for those over 60, existing chronic conditions, remote communities with limited health infrastructure, high risk of importation

2021

January

Jan 5 – Started charging non-essential travellers for use of isolation centre, released vaccine strategy

Jan 16 – Temporary restrictions in Fort Liard

February

Feb 1 – Expanded exemptions for Nunavut travellers

March

Mar 4 – Residents of Fort Simpson and Norman Wells can isolate in their homes

Mar 5 – Vaccine 18+ in every community except Yellowknife

Mar 10 – Vaccines 18+ everywhere in NWT

Mar 15 – Vaccinations for non-resident workers in mines

April

Apr 21 – Reduction of self-isolation for fully vaccinated persons, remote tourism order in effect

Apr 30 – Outbreak in Yellowknife

May

May 3 – Mandatory masking order

May 5 – Temporary restrictions in Yellowknife, Ndilo, Dettah and Behchokq

May 6 – Expanded vaccine to ages 12 and up in outbreak areas

May 17 – Partial revocation of temporary restrictions in Yellowknife, Ndilo, Dettah and Behchokq amended masking order

May 26 – Expanded vaccine programs for ages 12 and up across NWT

June

June 2 – Expanded exemptions for Yukon travellers

June 9 – Release of *Emerging Wisely 2021: Step by Step Together*

Importation Risk

COVID-19 is a persistent virus and it will find a way to enter the territory. One of the most common ways it gets here is importation from other jurisdictions. What happens beyond our border both domestically and globally matters.

When COVID-19 case counts are high, that means the risk of importation is greater for the NWT.

The Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (OCPHO) has chosen a relatively low indicator of COVID-19 activity in Canada of less than 1,000 cases per day (seven-day average) as a threshold to relax self-isolation requirements after vaccinated travellers enter the territory, and reduce the length of self-isolation for partially or unvaccinated people.

The OCPHO believes this threshold allows for:

- Safety for NWT communities where some populations remain under vaccinated.
- Ability to maintain gatherings both indoors and outdoors at full capacity.
- An acceptable risk of a person returning to the NWT with COVID-19 even with relatively high numbers of returning travellers per week.
- The ability to safely decrease isolation duration for partially vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers.
- Mitigation of the severe implications if variants escaped vaccine immunity.

As of early June 2021, the NWT is ready to relax overall public health restrictions on outdoor gatherings first.

As vaccine coverage remains uneven, it is wise to maintain physical distancing and appropriate masking, and remember routine public health practices such as proper handwashing, healthy respiratory practices and staying home when you are sick.

And, please, get vaccinated if you are eligible.

Emerging Wisely 2021

Step by Step Together

Current Situation

Leisure Travel

Non-essential out of territory travel is not recommended.
Leisure travel into the territory is not permitted.
Exemptions considered.

Self-Isolation

Fully vaccinated: 8 days self-isolation with negative day 8 test.

All others: 14 days self-isolation and all household members self-isolate. Exemptions considered.

Indoor Gatherings

Up to 25 people/businesses follow approved plans.

Households can have up to 10 people with a maximum of 5 non-household members.

Outdoor Gatherings

Up to 50 people.

High-risk outdoor gatherings | Funerals/Celebrations of Life.
OCPHO approval required.

High-risk indoor gatherings | Live singing, wind instrument performances, indoor dancing, funerals, handgames, and indoor winter sports.
OCPHO approval required.

Moving Forward



Indoor Gatherings up to 200 People

This means most restaurants, stores, offices and other business are at normal capacity.

You can go to people's houses, have people over, have workplace get-togethers, and parties.

Approval required for high-risk events and gatherings of more than 200 people.

Outdoor Gatherings up to 200 People

This means enjoying things like outdoor sports, music festivals, garage sales, food and drink on patios, and parades.

Approval required for high-risk events and gatherings of more than 200 people.

Vaccination Rates & Cases

Potential Setbacks

If the current vaccines are less effective or ineffective against a variant of concern, more restrictions may be required while a booster vaccine is developed.

Northwest Territories

Canada

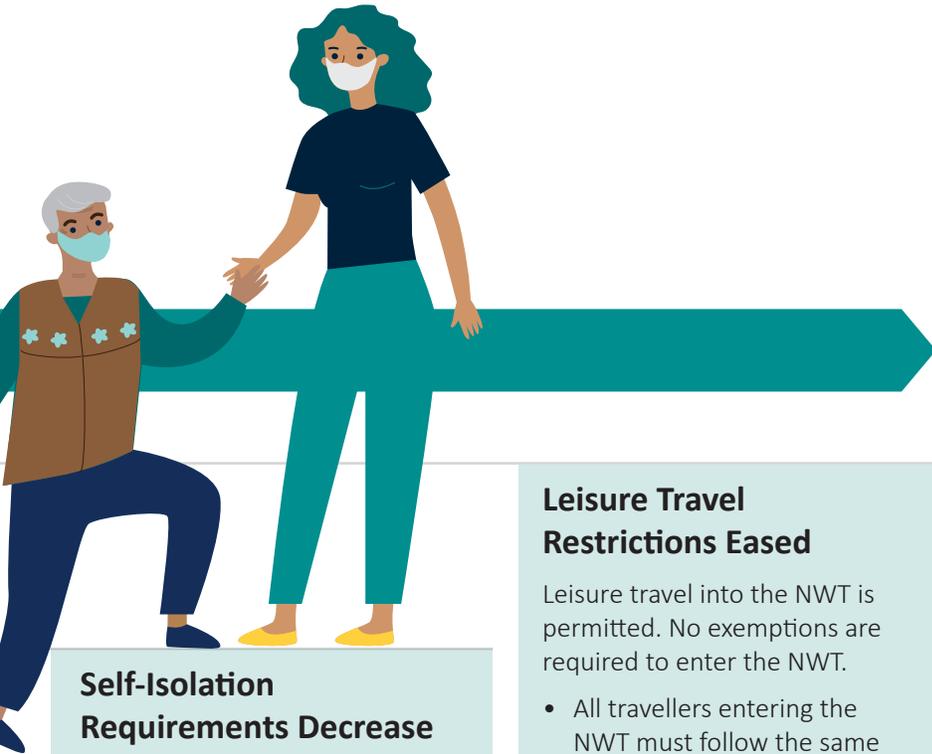
Early June

66 - 75% Partial

Early July

66 - 75% Full or 75% Partial

Unless otherwise specified, vaccination coverage applies to 18 years and older.



A New Normal

All Restrictions Lifted

Including:

- Leisure travel
- Self-isolation
- Indoor gatherings
- Outdoor gatherings

Together we will emerge wisely to manage personal risks without restrictions.

Leisure Travel Restrictions Eased

Leisure travel into the NWT is permitted. No exemptions are required to enter the NWT.

- All travellers entering the NWT must follow the same self-isolation requirements as residents.
- International travellers must follow federal quarantine regulations.
- Self-isolation plans required for contact tracing and rapid response preparation.

Self-Isolation Requirements Decrease

For NWT residents, and non-resident essential workers and travellers with an exemption:

- Fully vaccinated: no self-isolation required.
- Partially vaccinated: 8 days self-isolation (testing required).
- Unvaccinated: 10 days self-isolation (testing required) and all household members self-isolate.

Day 1 and 14 test required for travellers going directly to a small community. Day 1 and 14 tests required for some essential workers.

NWT residents resume leisure travel.

Early Summer

<1,000 Daily New Cases*
and
66 - 75% Partial

Late Summer/Early Fall

75% Full

<1,000 Daily New Cases*
and
66 - 75% Full

Mid to Late Fall

75% Full (12 years+)
and
66 - 75% partial (total pop.)

<1,000 Daily New Cases*
and
66 - 75% Full

Anticipated timelines are subject to reaching the outlined vaccination and case count thresholds.

*Seven-day average.

To review the latest Public Health Orders visit:

www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19/en/current-public-health-orders



What We Can Relax and When

Outdoor Gatherings

Restrictions on most outdoor gatherings will be eased.

Risk Threshold — **Yellow - NWT 66-75% Partially Vaccinated**

Anticipated Timeline — June 9, 2021

We will be able to spend time with our family and friends outside. That means we'll be able to enjoy outdoor sports, music festivals, food and drink on patios, garage sales and parades.

Children can play outside without having to physically distance. Activities involving less than 200 people can go ahead with minimal restrictions.

If you are planning events involving more than 200 people you will need to apply through ProtectNWT for approval. The Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) will assist businesses and organizations who would like to hold these events and are looking for ways to mitigate risk and protect everyone attending. Businesses and organizations that already have approval in place to hold these events can continue to follow their approved plan or re-apply if things have changed.

Outside gatherings are lower risk because there is a lot of space to physically distance and more airflow so COVID-19 has less of a chance to hang around.

Some gatherings are still considered high risk like funerals or celebrations of life. These activities still need approval from the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (OCPHO). The OCPHO will work with you to set measures that will help reduce the risk to everyone attending these events.

Risk Categories

Red		Highest risk – Lowest vaccination coverage
Orange		High risk – Low vaccination coverage
Yellow		Moderate risk – Moderate vaccination coverage
Green		Low risk – High vaccination coverage

Indoor Gatherings

Restrictions will be eased.

Risk Threshold — **Yellow - NWT 66-75% Fully Vaccinated** *OR*
Green - NWT 75% Partially Vaccinated

Anticipated Timeline — Early July - after the school year ends

We will be able to gather indoors again, with some limits on the highest risk activities.

All indoor public spaces can return to near pre-pandemic capacities. That means we can gather in restaurants, stores, places of worship, offices and other businesses as we did before the pandemic.

You can go over to people's houses and host friends and family in your home. We can look forward to events like family reunions, workplace get-togethers and parties.

You should consider the risk of getting COVID-19 before taking part in indoor activities and ways to mitigate that risk. If physical distancing can't be done, we recommend you wear a mask indoors. Higher risk indoor facilities such as health care, long-term care and corrections facilities may have more stringent policies.

Up to 200 people can gather indoors in one space without an exemption. This limit allows our health care system to better respond should there be COVID-19 cases linked to an indoor gathering. If you're planning events involving over 200 people you will need to apply through ProtectNWT for approval.

You will need to provide an approved exposure plan for live singing, wind instrument performances, indoor dancing, handgames, funerals and indoor winter sports. Groups with existing approved plans will not need to reapply unless they would like to change how they are gathering.



Self-Isolation

Self-isolation requirements will be eased.

Risk Threshold — **Yellow - Canada 66-75% Partially Vaccinated *AND***

Yellow - Canada case count under 1,000 (seven-day average)

Anticipated Timeline — Early summer

The NWT experiences a lot of travel across its borders and importation is the main source of infection. As COVID-19 cases outside of the NWT consistently decrease to below 1,000 cases daily, the risk of importation will be low enough that public health orders related to travel restrictions and self-isolation can be lifted or adjusted. Less than 1000 daily cases across Canada (averaged weekly) indicates that vaccines and public health measures are working to keep COVID-19 activity low in Canada. The NWT's *Emerging Wisely* measures will reduce the risk of introduction to a safe level at this point in the pandemic, as long as:

- There is no indication of future waves of COVID-19 infections across Canada, especially in the fall when people return to congregating in closed spaces.
- There is no introduction of new COVID-19 variants that vaccines don't protect us from.

The CPHO will no longer recommend that only essential travel take place. People are encouraged to enjoy travel for many purposes while taking precautions. NWT residents, essential workers, compassionate travellers and people coming into the NWT for family reunification can look forward to the following:

- No isolation for fully vaccinated travellers – including their household members.
- Essential workers dealing with vulnerable populations or who work in congregate settings or small communities will need a negative day 1 COVID-19 test prior to work and a day 14 test while self-monitoring through an exemption process.
- 8-day isolation for partially vaccinated travellers (and household members) with a negative day 8 COVID-19 test.
- 10-day isolation for unvaccinated travellers (and household members) with a negative day 10 COVID-19 test.
- Those travelling to small communities* will need a day 14 test while finishing their self-monitoring.

**Communities other than: Yellowknife, Inuvik, Fort Smith, Hay River, Fort Simpson and Norman Wells*

Risk Categories

Red		Highest risk – Lowest vaccination coverage
Orange		High risk – Low vaccination coverage
Yellow		Moderate risk – Moderate vaccination coverage
Green		Low risk – High vaccination coverage

Travel Restrictions

Travel restrictions on leisure travel into the NWT will be eased.

- Risk Threshold** —
- Green** - NWT 75% Fully Vaccinated **AND**
 - Yellow** - Canada 66-75% Fully Vaccinated **AND**
 - Yellow** - Canada case count under 1,000 (seven-day average)

Anticipated Timeline — Late summer - early fall

At this stage everyone will be able to visit the NWT! The following will apply to all visitors. The self-isolation requirements are the same as above, but we are opening up who can travel into the NWT.

- No self-isolation for fully vaccinated travellers.
- 8-day isolation for partially vaccinated travellers (and household members) with a negative day 8 COVID-19 test.
- 10-day isolation for unvaccinated travellers (and household members) with a negative day 10 COVID-19 test.
- Those travelling to small communities* will need a day 14 test while finishing their self-monitoring.

*Communities **other than**: Yellowknife, Inuvik, Fort Smith, Hay River, Fort Simpson and Norman Wells

To help with contact tracing and rapidly respond to any outbreaks, Self-Isolation Plans will still be required until all travel restrictions are lifted.

All travellers should self-isolate and seek medical guidance immediately if any symptoms show up or they are named as a close contact or part of an outbreak.



No Restrictions

All restrictions will be lifted.

Risk Threshold — **Green** - NWT 75% Fully Vaccinated (12+) **AND**
Yellow - NWT 66-75% Partially Vaccinated (in total population, including children younger than 12) **AND**
Green - Canada case count under 1,000 (seven-day average)

Anticipated Timeline — Mid-late fall

We anticipate that the Pfizer vaccine will be approved for children less than 12 years old by the time school starts in the fall of 2021. We will be able to lift all restrictions and end the Public Health Emergency when 75 percent of our population 12-and-older has both doses of the vaccine and at least 66 percent of our total population, including children younger than 12, have received the first dose of the vaccine.

All restrictions lifted means: no self-isolation requirements, travel restrictions or limits on capacity for activities indoors and outdoors.

NWT residents should be aware that when this happens the structures put in place to respond to the pandemic will be removed. There will be no enhanced testing or increased contact tracing capacity. COVID-19 compliance and enforcement will be stood down. There will be no monitoring of the border. We will adjust to living with COVID-19.

Risk Categories

Red		Highest risk – Lowest vaccination coverage
Orange		High risk – Low vaccination coverage
Yellow		Moderate risk – Moderate vaccination coverage
Green		Low risk – High vaccination coverage



A New Normal

COVID-19 will be around for a long time even with effective vaccines. We must continue to live with the virus and adapt to a new normal.

Variants of Concern

There are still high levels of infection, community spread and inequitable access to vaccines in many other parts of the world. That's why we can expect variants of concern to develop and current vaccines to be less effective or ineffective to protect us from these new strains of the virus. These situations would require a booster dose of a vaccine that protects against these strains and would likely result in a need to return to more restrictive measures until vaccine coverage could catch up.

There is increasing concern that the "delta variant" or B.1.617 variant first identified in India, could start a fourth wave of COVID-19 infections. It spreads more easily and causes much more severe sickness than other variants. It has now become the dominant strain in the United Kingdom and India and has spread to over 62 countries at the time of this publication. It is also the dominant strain in the Peel region in Ontario. Fully vaccinated people have more immunity against the delta variant, but partially vaccinated people have significantly less immunity and are much more likely to become infected and spread it to others.

Should a new variant or public health risk occur we will release an update to this plan to reflect the current risk at that time.

Opening International and U.S. Borders

As this plan was being released, the criteria to open Canada's borders to U.S. and international non-essential travel has not been announced. It is anticipated that over 75 percent of Canadians need to be vaccinated before the Government of Canada would consider reopening the U.S. border and lifting international restrictions on non-essential travel. The situation continues to be monitored as the pandemic evolves.

Personal Choice and Risk Management

What can you do to protect yourself as public health measures are relaxed?

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the NWT's public health measures have protected individuals, families, and communities from COVID-19 exposures. NWT residents, workplaces, small communities and larger centres have all learned a lot about COVID-19.

As restrictions begin to relax across the NWT and Canada, and we learn to live with COVID-19, individuals will need to make personal risk assessments and choose the best options to protect themselves.

What Can I Do to Protect Myself?

1. Get vaccinated.

The most important measure is getting vaccinated. Globally, as of June 4, 2021, over two billion people have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, including hundreds of millions of people who received an mRNA vaccine.

The vaccines in the NWT are very safe and effective. In some high-risk situations, however, like living in a home with someone who has COVID-19, even someone who is fully vaccinated can still develop COVID-19. Even if a person develops COVID-19, the vaccines are very protective against severe disease. People who are vaccinated should still get tested if they have symptoms of COVID-19 and continue to follow routine public health measures.

It is also important that NWT residents get their second dose as soon as they are eligible. As first dose vaccinations have increased across Canada, it is anticipated that the delta variant B.1.617 will become the dominant variant. Studies have shown that one dose of mRNA vaccine is only 33 percent effective against this variant.

2. Be careful with travel.

For travel advice, NWT residents can review the Public Health Agency of Canada's travel guidance. For domestic travel, it is always important to look at provincial and territorial breakdowns of regional hotspots for COVID-19 activity.

3. Practice healthy habits.

To learn more about healthy respiratory practices, visit www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19/services/healthy-habits.

4. Make an informed decision and assess your personal level of risk when choosing to attend an event or activity.

Making Informed Decisions

PART 1. What information will help me make an informed decision and assess the level of risk in my community?

1. What is the COVID-19 situation globally and in Canada?

- Are there reports of new variants of concern that are more easily transmissible or cause severe disease?
- Are there new variants of concern that current vaccines do not protect against?

2. What is the COVID-19 situation in the NWT and in my community?

- Are there any outbreaks in the NWT? Are there any outbreaks in my community?
- What does wastewater surveillance show in my community (if applicable)?
- Is there community transmission in the NWT? Is there community transmission in my community?
- What is the vaccine uptake in my community? Do I live in a community with high vaccine uptake?

Type of Information	Lower Risk	Moderate Risk	Higher Risk
New variants of concern	No new variants of concern	New variants circulating that are not more transmissible and /or moderate in severity	New variants circulating that are significantly transmissible and/or severe
Vaccine effectiveness against new variants	Vaccines shown to work against variants	Vaccines provide partial protection	Vaccines do not protect against variant
Outbreaks	No outbreak declared in your community	Outbreak declared but is contained	Outbreak declared and not contained
Wastewater surveillance	No COVID-19 detected	Positive and/or expected wastewater signal	Positive and/or unexpected wastewater signal
Community transmission	No community transmission detected	Community transmission detected in the NWT	Community transmission detected in my community or community I am travelling to
Community vaccine uptake	High uptake	Moderate uptake	Low uptake

Once I have assessed the risk at a community level, it is important to assess the risk level of the activity I want to participate in.

PART 2. What information will help me make an informed decision and assess the level of risk of the activity I want to participate in?

Characteristic of Activity	Lower risk	Moderate risk	Higher risk
Who is participating	Alone or with household members	Gathering with friends and family who are not in your household	Gathering with people who you do not know or you do not know everyone in attendance
Are other participants vaccinated	All other individuals are vaccinated	Gathering includes individuals who are not fully vaccinated	Individuals are largely unvaccinated
Gathering size	Small gathering	Medium gathering	Large gathering
Type of gathering or activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual gathering • Contactless pick/up or drop off 	In-person with spacing, physical barriers or masking in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In person gathering • Close contact • No masking
Where is the gathering?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoors • Large space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoors, well ventilated • Large to moderate space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoors, poorly ventilated • Small space
Spacing	Physical distancing can be maintained	Physical distancing by household or social group	Physical distancing cannot be maintained
Duration of activity	Short interaction with others	Moderate duration with others	Prolonged interactions with others (multiple hours)
Travel history of attendees	Nobody has returned from travel recently	Persons who have recently returned from travel within Canada	Someone has recently returned from travel outside of Canada or from high incidence area
Symptoms	Nobody in attendance has any symptoms of COVID-19	Individual may or may not be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19	Individuals are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
Activity temperature	Warm and dry		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold (example ice arena) • Humid (example steam room, pool)
Nature of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low exertion (example yoga, walking) • Minimal movement 	Shared equipment (example volleyball, basketball, frisbee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aerosolizing (example singing, wind instruments) • Cause heavy breathing (example HIIT classes, spin, intense sports, dancing)

Key Pillars of Public Health Response

A strong public health response is needed to protect the population until the pandemic is declared over or COVID-19 becomes much less of a threat.

The NWT's public health response is:



Wastewater Surveillance

Wastewater testing is a sensitive and cost-effective way to detect, identify and inform public health actions to stop the spread of COVID-19. It can detect the virus even before people feel sick or get tested.



Rapid Testing

The target turnaround time for COVID-19 test results is within 24 hours of receiving the sample at a laboratory. If the number of tests exceeds capacity due to an outbreak or an unexpected wastewater signal, tests may be sent to Alberta for processing. A detailed testing summary is available on the NWT COVID-19 Dashboard.



Targeted Screening

To be helpful to public health professionals testing people without symptoms, tests must be targeted toward people who are most likely to be positive for COVID-19. Of the people diagnosed with COVID-19 in the NWT to date, roughly 38 percent had no symptoms. Since we are screening incoming travellers most at risk to test positive for COVID-19, and essential workers in high-risk settings for testing, we are able to reduce self-isolation requirements.



Case Investigation and Timely Contact Tracing

In a case investigation public health staff works with a suspected or confirmed infected person to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the timeframe while they may have been infectious. Contacts are people who interacted with a person with a COVID-19 infection and are at higher risk of acquiring COVID-19 themselves. Sometimes, out of caution, it is necessary to consider everyone who was at the same location or event as a person with COVID-19 as contacts. It is important that these people are contacted quickly to reduce spread.



Rapid Response Team

In an outbreak, or if community spread happens, case investigations and contact tracing will quickly overwhelm local public health capacity and compromise an effective response.

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority's COVID-19 Response Team's (ACRT) brings together leads from clinical, operations, and logistics areas from across the three health and social services authorities. They collaborate on system planning and work with their respective local teams to ensure operational planning and readiness is carried out.

It was developed to provide clarity for employees, patients and the public regarding the approach for caring for patients with COVID-19, the health and social services system's staged approach to respond to a surge in COVID-19, and the structures in place to support decision-making in a complex environment through a pandemic.



Health Care System Capacity

The NWT has carefully planned for how it will manage patients with COVID-19 who require hospital care.

The NWT health and social services system is limited compared to southern provinces that have larger populations. Outbreaks and COVID-19 cases requiring hospitalization would place huge demand on the NWT health care system and potentially limit services for other important health care needs.

To stay healthy and safe, we will want to continue some of these regular public health practices even after all restrictions are lifted:

- Get vaccinated when you are eligible.
- Stay home if you are sick, avoid close contact with others and get assessed.
- Wear a mask, especially in indoor public spaces.
- Turn and cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Throw used tissues in the garbage.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer when appropriate.
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces.

Thank you

You have made a difference in how the NWT has fared over the course of this pandemic.

Thanks to the efforts of the people of the NWT, our businesses, essential workers and visitors, the NWT has been one of the safest places to be during the pandemic.

We have all made changes and sacrifices to stay safe.

As we emerge from this challenging time, your continued kindness, support and care for each other and our communities is greatly appreciated.



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For more information, please visit
www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19

