



Self-Isolation Changes – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do people need to isolate at all if they are fully vaccinated?

While emerging evidence is optimistic, we still need to confirm how effective the vaccine is against transmitting COVID-19 to others and providing protection against the identified variants of concern. Other considerations include:

- Canada is experiencing a third wave COVID-19.
- Variants of concern (VoC) are important because they are newly mutated viruses. Mutations happen when many people spread the virus to one another quickly. It is similar to the flu, which also mutates quickly from year to year. There needs to be new influenza (flu) vaccines produced every year to adapt to mutations. We do not know yet if they same will be true for COVID-19. The best way to slow down transmissions, which will then also slow down mutations that cause variants of concern, is to get vaccinated and received your full dosage.
- We also need to ensure we protect anyone who is unable to be vaccinated. Vaccines may seem to provide immunity to most VoC, but these variants also seem to spread faster and make people sicker, putting NWT residents who are not vaccinated at more risk.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it is not known how long the vaccines prevent infection and transmission. Immunity persists for several months, but the full duration is not yet known.

2. Is getting two doses of the vaccine the same as being fully vaccinated ?

No, fully vaccinated means that the vaccine has taken full effect. This does not happen until at least two weeks after receiving your full dosage. This means 2 doses of an mRNA such as Pfizer or Moderna or one dose of Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine. You are NOT fully vaccinated if you have received one dose of an mRNA vaccine and one dose of a viral vector vaccine (i.e. AstraZeneca). Please continue to follow all public health guidance and precautions even after you have been fully vaccinated. If you have questions on whether you are fully vaccinated or not, please reach out to your health care provider.

3. How is this fair to people that can't, or choose not to, take the vaccine?

The Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) has reviewed the current evidence and weighed the public health risk related to those who are fully vaccinated and sees the risk as lower. With this in mind, we can reduce restrictions where possible but keep measures in place where there is still significant risk involved.

While it is unfortunate that those who are not vaccinated can't receive the same treatment, this also helps protect others who are not able to receive the vaccine and



could experience severe complications if they were to contract COVID-19. This is a step-by-step, careful approach to ending restrictions eventually for all, while doing everything we can to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in the NWT.

Though vaccination is a choice, it still poses a risk if a person chooses not to receive a vaccine. Getting vaccinated helps protect those who do not have a choice and are unable to receive the vaccine, but could experience severe complications if they contracted COVID-19. The approach is to address the public health risk. While the OCPHO respect a person's choice, their additional risk does need to be considered when applying or reducing restrictions.

4. When does this take effect?

Wednesday April 21, 2021. If you are fully vaccinated and currently in self-isolation, you may book an appointment to receive your COVID-19 test on or after day 8 of your self-isolation timeframe. You can book a test by contacting your health centre or online if in [Yellowknife](#).

Please contact ProtectNWT if you are interested in changing your self-isolation period and follow all instructions provided.

5. Why did you decide eight days?

COVID-19 symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. However, the average is 5 to 7 days between exposure and symptom onset. We know on day 8 there is a significant reduction according to modeling (science-based pattern predictions). This modeling, along with additional symptom checks and health measures (wearing masks) creates a very low risk.

It is still possible to develop symptoms after eight days, therefore monitoring for symptoms and symptom checks must continue for the full 14 days. You are also required to wear a mask at all times while indoors (unless eating or drinking) and when two metres distance cannot be maintained outdoors.

6. What about non-NWT residents who want to come up to visit? Do the same rules apply to them?

The same changes that apply to returning fully vaccinated NWT residents will also apply to fully vaccinated non-residents if granted approval from the OCPHO to travel within the NWT.

Non-residents are only able to travel into the NWT under certain circumstances. Workers must follow a different set of rules. Some visitors can apply for a [travel exemption](#) when filing a self-isolation plan that need to be approved by the OCPHO, such as for compassionate or family reunification reasons or for other exceptional circumstances. Non-residents will need to supply proof of COVID-19 vaccination from



the jurisdiction in which they received a COVID-19 vaccination. This needs to be provided to the NWT healthcare provider at the time of their COVID-19 test in the NWT.

7. When will younger people be able to get vaccinated in the NWT?

Clinical phased trials are underway. Pfizer results showed great efficacy in the 12 –15 age group and it is anticipated that the Moderna vaccine will release results soon. Given both are mRNA vaccines, similar results are anticipated in Moderna trials. However, the NWT CPHO must await Health Canada’s approval and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization guidance.

8. How likely am I to get COVID-19 after being fully vaccinated?

COVID-19 vaccines have been proven effective at preventing COVID-19 disease, especially severe illness and death. Current mRNA vaccines have shown a 94% reduced infection rate in fully immunized persons, but it is still possible for a fully vaccinated person to contract COVID-19. There is not yet enough research collected that can tell us how likely or unlikely your chances are of becoming sick with a variant strain after vaccination. Early data show the vaccines may work against some variants, but could be less effective against others. NWT residents must continue to follow public health measures, including shortened self-isolation.

9. I am travelling with a non-vaccinated person. Do I qualify for this exemption?

No, if a person who is not fully vaccinated returns to the NWT from outside the territory the whole household must follow the existing public health measures (entire household must self-isolate for 14 days). All individuals of the household must follow these measures regardless of their vaccination status.

10. I am fully vaccinated, but returning home to a household with members who are not fully vaccinated. What do they do?

Household members of a fully vaccinated traveller (provided that all those that travelled are fully vaccinated) need to isolate for the same amount of time the traveller needs to isolate. Once the fully vaccinated traveller receives a negative test result, the household member(s) no longer need to isolate. They are still required to monitor for symptoms. If at any time either the traveller or the non-vaccinated household member becomes sick with symptoms of COVID-19, they are required to self-isolate immediately and contact a local health care provider.



11. I am fully vaccinated but returning home to a household with members who are also fully vaccinated what do they do?

Fully vaccinated household members of a fully vaccinated traveller (provided that all those that travelled are fully vaccinated) are not required to self-isolate. They are still required to self-monitor for the full 14 days. If, however at any time either the traveller or the vaccinated household member becomes sick with symptoms of COVID-19, they are required to self-isolate immediately and contact a local health care provider.

12. How do you determine if someone has been fully vaccinated or not?

A healthcare provider is able to confirm that residents are fully vaccinated when a person is tested on day 8 by checking that person's Electronic Medical Record status.

Non-residents who are granted approval to travel in the NWT, or residents who received a vaccine outside the NWT, will need to provide proof of vaccination from where they received their vaccine. You will need this at this time of testing or else you will not be able to receive your test. If you have received your vaccine in the Northwest Territories you DO NOT need to request an official copy of your immunization record to be eligible for this exemption.

13. What other conditions do I need to follow if I choose to reduce my isolation period?

You will need to continue to monitor for symptoms and complete your day 10 and 14 symptom checks. You will need to wear a mask at all times when indoors (unless eating or drinking) and outdoors when you cannot keep a physical distance of 2 metres. If at any time you start having symptoms, are named as a contact or part of an outbreak, you will need to self-isolate immediately and then call a healthcare provider. If at any time a healthcare provider tells you that you must self-isolate their direction supersedes this exemption.

14. If I am fully vaccinated, is it ok to book non-essential travel?

Due to the incidence of COVID-19 across Canada and the increasing levels of variants of concern, non-essential travel is still not recommended until the situation improves and more Canadians have the vaccine available to them.